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BOURGEOIS PORTSMOUTH: SOCIAL RELATIONS  
IN A VICTORIAN DOCKYARD TOWN, 1815 - 75

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I am conscious of corners cut, questions unanswered, facts forgotten; need I add that all errors are mine, alone?



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## SUMMARY

Nineteenth century Portsmouth experienced greater continuity of development than most industrial towns. Its size, the military and naval presence, and a large working class, were already well-established by the late eighteenth century. State ownership meant that the Yard was not producing for a competitive product market; other than politically-inspired demands for economy, management had little incentive to rationalize production. The civilian trades were more typical of other areas: mainly small-scale clothing production, often employing women and often based upon outwork.

Thanks to the large state sector and the consequent under-development of commercial activities, Portsmouth had few extremely wealthy inhabitants, but many in comfortable circumstances. The most wealthy were often women, followed by retailers, commercial men, building employers, brewers, and a few professional men. Despite a widely-held belief that the town was not sharply differentiated by wealth, cultural activities were greatly affected by class and status. Yard officials were infrequent participants in high-status activities, unless they held existing naval officer rank. Officers and the Southsea elite were the most frequent participants.

The Borough continued to be dominated by Whig-Liberals after the 1830s. In particular, the role of the Carter family was undiminished for some years. Growth of the electorate, fears for the future of the Dockyard, decline of reformist

enthusiasm, and resentment at Whig policies fed an expanding populist Toryism. Always characterized by high participation by retailers, the status of Councillors fell steadily. Rating was the most important issue in local politics.

Authority in the Yard was shared, between the Admiralty, local management, and key groups of craftsmen. Most Yard workers saw no need for trade union organization. 'Friendly' benefits were already covered by non-contributory provision from the employer; 'representation' took place through the committee system and petitioning. Only with the onset of serious demarcation disputes did the labour force start to organize. Outside the Yard, the only permanent organizations were among skilled building workers. Workers were more likely to organize as consumers, through cooperatives; local social leaders could be asked to take up Dockyard issues.

The concept of social control has limited value. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was not fully implemented, and the provision of a workhouse was unwillingly undertaken. Charities were more important in creating or confirming status than in controlling working people. While both poor relief and education were seen as means of social control, working people evaded poor relief through friendly societies or Admiralty provision, and schools met many disciplinary difficulties. The Borough Police demonstrated class bias; only with difficulty were the police themselves brought to accept their role. Most moral reform movements were conspicuous for their failure to secure their ends.



ABBREVIATIONS

A.S.C.J.	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners
A.S.E.	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
H.C.R.O.	Hants. County Record Office
H.L.R.O.	House of Lords Record Office
Hist.	History
<u>H.T.</u>	<u>Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle</u>
I.o.W.	Isle of Wight
J.	Journal
N.M.M.	National Maritime Museum
O.B.S.	Operative Bricklayers' Society
O.M.S.	Operative Masons' Society
P.C.L.	Portsmouth City Library (Reference Section)
P.C.L. (L.P.)	P.C.L. Local Pamphlet Collection
P.C.R.O.	Portsmouth City Record Office
P.O.	Post Office
Portsmo.	Portsmouth
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers
P.R.O.	Public Record Office

## INTRODUCTION

Social history probably creates questions at least as often as it provides answers, and this thesis will prove no exception. Its very title may provoke queries. Why use the word bourgeoisie? What new light can it shed upon an area already littered with the lamps of previous researchers? Or is it simply old hat - and a leaky Marxist hat at that? These questions have been debated before, and no doubt will be debated again, without providing compelling answers to the sceptic. No one would expect a postgraduate thesis to settle this; but it is worth saying a few words in justification of my choice of this term.

## I

R.H. Tawney, writing of seventeenth century Britain, remarked that in the absence of juristic status categories, 'it is not easy to point to a class . . . which, judged by the sources of their incomes, might properly be described as bourgeois. Given such conditions, the term is too blunt an instrument to dissect the resulting complexities of social organization'. One imagines that Tawney might have expressed similar criticisms of any attempt to use the term 'bourgeois' to describe a nineteenth century social class in Britain (although he did believe that the term was appropriate for French history, and described the parallel English social class as 'a species of the [same] genus')<sup>1</sup>. Pre-Revolutionary France, indeed, would seem to be the classic home of the

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<sup>1</sup>J.M. Winter (ed.), History and Society: Essays by R.H. Tawney, 1978, p. 211.

term, both in the sense of its etymology and of its more modern denotation. And the term, of course, outlasted the Revolution which abolished those juristic status categories which Tawney viewed as important criteria for the deployment of the term. One would expect, then, that one might find among French historians the care and sensitivity which Tawney had hoped for.

Do they order things better in France? Certainly, the term has been widely used, both as an adjective to describe the 'social nature' of the Revolution, and as a noun to denote the social class which acquired hegemony during the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Yet while Tawney was calling for further 'definition or qualification' of the term, Ernest Labrousse was encouraging historians to forget about the concept and get on with the research:

Definir le bourgeois? Nous ne serions pas d'accord. Allons plutôt reconnaître sur place, dans ses sites, dans ses villes, cette espèce cittadine, et la mettre en état d'observation. . . . D'abord d'enquête. D'abord l'observation. Nous verrons plus tard pour la définition 2.

Tawney and Labrousse shared a view of social processes as a totality (and, interestingly, both here adopted the metaphor of species to denote class position). However, while the one called for further conceptual refinement, the other was

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the debate over the French Revolution, discussed in A. Cobban, The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution, Cambridge 1962, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Cit. in E. Grenzi, 'Il "Daumardismo": Una Via Senza Uscita?', Quaderni Storici, xxix/xxx 1975, p. 729.

prepared to edge definitions towards the bottom of the agenda.

Tawney and Labrousse were writing over twenty years ago. Historians still have not reached any agreement on the way they think of the wealthy and powerful in nineteenth century Europe. In Britain in particular, social historians have mostly found that their interests lie within the world of labour, paying less attention to the idle - or active - rich. The dominant view seems to be that our more conservative predecessors paid excessive attention to the richer and more influential figures in our history; the job of current research is to rescue the experiences and achievements of the neglected masses - the poor stockingers and deluded Southcottians, to give one version of the argument.

There is something in this view: from the position of the detached observer, it is clear that the history of society means the history of all the people who were its members, and not just of the leading figures; from the position of the political activist, it is both encouraging and enjoyable to uncover evidence of past struggles. However, there is a danger that one-sided 'labour history' may fall into the hole of an 'unconsidered pluralism' (in Greg MacLennan's words)<sup>1</sup>. To write the history of working people alone, on the grounds that the history of the influential has already been written, is by implication to accept the existing histories of the influential. That assumption is not, in

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<sup>1</sup>G. McLennan, 'Ideology and Consciousness: Some Problems in Marxist Historiography', C.C.C.S. Occasional Paper No. 45, Birmingham, 1976, p. 10.

my view, in the least way justified.

Not all British historians have fallen into the hole. Many have managed to keep their balance, producing histories of labour that also ask, and answer, questions about the behaviour of employers. Most of the more recent of such accounts have been studies of particular communities; given the local nature of much nineteenth century government and industry, such studies have found very real evidence of the often obtrusive ways in which the wealthy and powerful moulded many areas of social life. Yet even those who would agree that the history of the labourer is inadequate without some understanding of the role of his employer have found little profit in definitions<sup>1</sup>. The employer may well have been seen as a part of a wider social class, and this class has been spoken of as a 'bourgeoisie'; but this has been done in an ad hoc way, and certainly with less consideration than has been accorded to the slightest manifestation of working class resistance and consciousness.

In France the position is much more complicated. The 'Annales school' have always emphasized the inter-connectedness of different aspects of any historical process, and have

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<sup>1</sup>J. Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution, 1974, p. 161; 'It is not easy (or even very useful) to propose a tidy definition for a town's bourgeoisie. The main approach has been to take samples of individuals from all likely occupations and social groups - any that had (or might think they had) some stake in the system'.

continued to examine social totalities as though Popper's attacks on 'holism' had never been heard of. If the French have been more successful at the regional level than at the national, this difficulty is not so damaging for the historian of nineteenth century Britain, where quite considerable local autonomy remained until well into the present century<sup>1</sup>. The British historian can still benefit from an acquaintance of French historical writings, and this is especially true for a historian of the bourgeoisie. Several recent studies have dealt quite explicitly with 'La Bourgeoisie' as an historical problem, and in particular we have the pioneering works of Adeline Daumard<sup>2</sup>. Even Daumard has no qualms, however, about rejecting the notion of any definition of the term 'bourgeoisie'. Her reasons bear repeating at length:

En dépit des recherches nombreuses qui, depuis le XIXe siècle, ont été faites sur la bourgeoisie en particulier et sur les classes sociales en général, aucune définition n'est satisfaisante pour l'historien, car aucune ne rend compte de la condition ni de la psychologie des hommes qui, au XIXe siècle, vivaient comme des bourgeois, réagissent en bourgeois, se considéraient comme des bourgeois et étaient jugés comme tels par leur entourage et la société entière . . . .

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. S. Wilson, "They Order. . . This Matter Better in France". Some Recent Books on Modern French Historiography' Historical Journal, xxi, 1978, pp. 726.

<sup>2</sup>A. Daumard, Les Bourgeois de Paris au xixème Siècle, Paris 1970; (ed.), Les Fortunes Françaises au xixème Siècle, Paris 1973; 'Les structures bourgeoises en France à l'Epoque Contemporaine: Evolution ou permanence', pp. 449-63 of F. Braudel (ed.), Conjoncture Economique: Structures Sociales, Paris 1974.

Notre objectif était de caractériser la bourgeoisie: non tel ou tel milieu défini par une critère économique ou politique. . . . Or un individu ou une catégorie sociale peuvent être considérés comme bourgeois pour bien des raisons: les conditions de vie matérielle, les origines sociales et la formation intellectuelle et morale, les réactions et le comportement individuel et collectif sont des facteurs susceptibles de préciser le classement social <sup>1</sup>.

How far along the way does this take us?

Daumard is probably right to point to the diversity of those groups which went into the making of the French bourgeoisie. However, it is worth noting that the features which are actually listed have more to do with status than with class as normally defined. To 'live as a bourgeois' in nineteenth century France was to live without working, off rents or dividends; it is not certain whether this is what Daumard intends us to understand. Rather clearer is the reference to those who thought of themselves as bourgeois, and whose self-definition was generally accepted by those around them: this would have meant those who lived off 'unearned' income. Yet Daumard distinguishes the 'oisifs', or idle rich, as a separate category in her book; she also takes into account merchants, manufacturers, and professional men, who clearly did work. It is a difficult problem. The practical solution, too, is ad hoc: the possible reasons for a person or a social group to be considered as bourgeois, from material condition to collective behaviour, are in fact those characteristics which are susceptible to quantification. Perhaps the

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<sup>1</sup>Daumard, 1970, p. 7.

critical critics are right about history after all: its concepts are moulded slowly, and only after a protracted period of quarrying and patient die-casting.

## II

When it comes to matters of social class, most historians are at their most empirical and cautious. The term 'class' is associated, in many historians' minds, with a fixed and static sort of sociology; this is thought to be incompatible with the focus upon process that is considered essential to historical analysis. To be of any use, the notion of 'class' has to be accompanied by some consideration of its determinants - the forces and pressures which push and pull men and women into certain places within the social structure. The most important of these shaping forces are commonly thought to be those relationships which men and women enter during their working life. This is not the same as seeing class as a product of economic position, much less a product of income: non-economic considerations may well determine productive relations, but their importance for class is exactly the influence that they wield over the world of labour<sup>1</sup>. The implications of such a view of class for this thesis are not particularly startling. Those who, for

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<sup>1</sup>M. Godelier, 'Infrastructures, Societies and History', New Left Review, cxii 1978, p. 90.



whatever cause, have to support themselves through labour on behalf of another, are regarded as of the working class. Those who are able to live on incomes derived, ultimately, from the labour of others, are regarded as members of the bourgeoisie.

If there is difficulty, it is likely to come from the use of the term 'bourgeoisie'. Use of this word involves a variety of difficulties, as Raymond Williams has pointed out. The term is of French origin, and (although it has a history that stretches back into feudalism) it is associated with Marxist politics; it has the further disadvantage of denigratory overtones, after centuries of use as a short-hand cultural sneer. There are alternatives, which have the advantage of being lucid, relatively apolitical and inoffensive, and above all English. The chief of these is the expression 'middle class'. Yet it does not seem to me that 'middle class' and 'bourgeois' mean quite the same thing.

There are several difficulties, practical and theoretical, with the term 'middle class'. In a practical sense, it makes assumptions about certain types of people which are by no means justified. It is usual to include white-collar workers among the middle class, for example; yet these are quite clearly a very different kettle of fish from the great bankers and industrialists: one works for wages, one lives off profit. More theoretically, the term makes a number of assumptions about the nature of the social structure as a whole. It places certain groups - such as bankers and white collar workers - in a common situation vis-à-vis certain

other groups, which stand above (i.e. the upper class) and below (the lower class). The places in this tripartite social structure are allotted by status. If we speak of a 'middle class' in nineteenth century Britain, then where are we to find our 'upper' and 'lower' classes? How far can we go with constant sub-divisions into 'upper-middle', 'lower-middle', 'middle-lower', and 'lower-lower' classes? What sort of social relations characteristically occur between the classes? The term 'middle class' implies no particular set of relations between the classes other than that of status; it might apply with equal force to some Indian castes and to American car workers.

If it prevents the kind of dogmatism common to some historians who have written about the bourgeoisie<sup>1</sup>, then clearly the term 'middle class' has some advantages: it is open enough to recognize diversity of structure, motivation and behaviour. Equally possible, however, is a lack of historical specificity - displayed most obviously in the persistent tendency to discover a 'rising middle class' in every historical period. Eileen Powers, who was nothing if not careful, identified a 'middle class' (made up of merchants) in fourteenth century England. William Rubinstein has found that eighteenth century England was a most unusual type of 'one-class society': 'As well as an upper-class society, it was also a middle-

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<sup>1</sup>E.G. Barnby, 'Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie - Social Control in the 19th Century Black Country', Our History IV, 1972.

class society'. From 1832, indeed, England had two separate and quite distinct 'middle classes'<sup>1</sup>. With equal justification, one might discover a 'middle class' in antiquity, or the Iron Age. In general, it seems that the lack of any definite content in the term has led it to be used in unsatisfactory and sometimes self-contradictory ways<sup>2</sup>.

Is the term 'bourgeoisie' any better? Clearly it is by no means immune from many of the criticisms that one might make of the notion of a 'middle class'. In some ways it is more open than 'middle class': it does not commit one to the belief that the social group under discussion was necessarily subordinate (to an upper class), leaving open the possibility that one is speaking of a ruling group. In other respects, it is more closed. A number of characteristics are isolated and made explicit:

economically, the quintessential bourgeois was a 'capitalist' (i.e. either the possessor of capital, or the receiver of an income derived from such a source, or a profit-making entrepreneur, or all of these things) 3.

Closely related to "the quintessential bourgeois" were groups whose income was derived in exchange for supervisory

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<sup>1</sup>Eileen Power, The Wool Trade in English Medieval History, 1941, p. 122. W.D. Rubinstein, 'Wealth, Elites, and the Class Structure of Modern Britain', Past & Present CXXVI, 1977, pp. 99 - 26.

<sup>2</sup>E. Owen, 'The Elusive Middle Class', English xxvi, 1977, pp. 77-8; R.Q. Gray, 'Religion, Culture and Social Class in Late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Edinburgh', in G.J. Crossick (ed.), The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>Age of Capital, 1977, p. 283.

functions over production, distribution or exchange; rather more problematic are groups engaged in occupations that involved the sale of personal or collective services, such as army and navy officers, or civilian professionals<sup>1</sup>. What probably placed men from these groups either in the bourgeoisie or outside it was a range of social connections, from kinship to clientèle.

However important economic relations may be in shaping classes, they have never been free of all cultural and political determinations. Hobsbawm again has made this point, arguing that socially,

the main characteristic of the bourgeoisie as a class was that it was a body of persons of power and influence, independent of the power and influence of traditional birth and status. To belong to it a man had to be 'someone'; a person who counted as an individual, because of his wealth, his capacity to command other men, or otherwise to influence them <sup>2</sup>.

Perhaps not entirely independent of the power and influence of traditional birth and status, though: the wealthy merchants of London still hustled their sons through public school, married their daughters to nobles, and settled themselves on the land<sup>3</sup>. They did so because these things helped them to count for something in 'Society'.

It is important that the limits on the concept are recognized. If 'bourgeoisie' usefully conjures up a view of a class whose interests and experiences could be shared despite

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. T.J. Johnson, Professions and Power.

<sup>2</sup>Hobsbawm, op.cit., pp. 283-6.

<sup>3</sup>W. Rubinstein, op.cit., pp. 114-15.

distinct geographical or cultural loyalties and groupings, it can also lead one to suppose that it was a monolithic block. If certain experiences were shared, others were confined to certain sections, and interests might at times clash. Speaking of Britain alone, one might instance the persistent divide between 'trade' and the land; within 'trade', one can distinguish vertical divisions (commerce/industry) as well as horizontal ones (based on relative wealth and scale) and cultural ones (not only between religions, but between the respectable and the less so). The divisions could be manifold, and the term 'bourgeoisie' should not hide their importance from us.

Another important qualification has been expressed by E.P. Thompson, who has argued that landed proprietors were embraced within capitalist social relations<sup>1</sup>. Clearly not all landowners, whether peers or commoners, can be seen as bourgeois: the same criteria have to be used in placing landowners as in placing merchants or industrialists. The point is that production for the market, wage labour, and private individual ownership of the land had been the norm for at least three centuries before the starting point of this thesis. Again, one would wish to stress the diversity of conditions and experiences, while retaining the idea that they yet held something in common.

Finally, I have tried to ration the use of 'bourgeois' as

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<sup>1</sup>The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays, 1978, pp. 40-3.

an adjective. I have tried not to speak too often of 'bourgeois behaviour', for instance, and I hope I never speak of 'the bourgeois state'. It is reasonable to speak of certain types of activity as 'bourgeois', because that is the group from which are drawn those who participate in that activity. It is much more arguable to suggest that the state is exclusively run by and in the interests of a class. Still less does one want to tempt fate by suggesting that the whole of British society was a mirror-image of bourgeois values and aspirations. Society, in that sense, was the outcome of struggles and fissures, both between different social classes, and between different groups within each class. I have tried to cater for the divisions inherent within the nineteenth century bourgeoisie by using the term 'elite', in a fairly loose way, to represent those whose possession of status and authority was in some way distinctive. Thus, I speak at different times of 'the Southsea elite', 'the naval elite', or 'the political elite'. The suggestion is that these elites comprised distinctive groups within the bourgeoisie. Whether this distinctiveness derived from status, or wealth, or power, is left open.

### III

This thesis represents an attempt to think through some of these problems, through a study of the southern naval port and arsenal of Portsmouth. The choice of town was governed by several factors, academic and logistic. First, and not to be despised, was the fact that it is an old Borough, and

has voluminous and well-kept records. Second, I know the place well; this enabled me to make fewer mistakes than I might have had I settled on another town. Third, its very peculiarity - the role of the state as employer - offered a richly-documented view of the actual political economy of nineteenth century government and industry. Fourthly, the town's military value meant that it was an old urban and industrial centre by the time that the Industrial Revolution was making itself felt in the north; Portsmouth faced the problems of urbanization and industrialization at a relatively early stage.

The first three chapters try to convey something of my sense of the type of town that Portsmouth must have been. Already, by 1800 it was crowded, so smelly that one area was known as 'Spice Island', and it rang with the sounds of the naval Dockyard. It must have seemed a strange place to contemporary visitors; if they came by sea, they set eyes on Portsmouth after passing the wooded, peaceful coast of Dorset or Sussex; if they came by land, they had travelled across the poor agricultural land of Hampshire - Jane Austen's Hampshire, of course. What Jane Austen thought of Portsmouth is recorded in Mansfield Park. But little has been left behind by the many immigrants that came to Portsmouth to work in the Yard or in the mass of small-scale clothing industries or in the wildly fluctuating construction trades. Some of them came from far away - Scotland or perhaps Africa - but most came from the poverty-stricken villages of central southern England; their speech would have been familiar to Thomas Hardy, as would the reasons for that bitter-sweet journey of

the migrant worker. But Portsmouth had no Hardy in the 1890s to recall the great changes of previous generations; it had no Booth or Rowntree to survey its poor; its songs went unrecorded by pen or phonograph.

The most articulate purveyors of a town's identity are the members of its local bourgeoisie. Today, Portsmouth is striking for the relative absence of a bourgeois presence: it has no tree-lined avenues of approach, through the shrubs of which one glimpses the big houses. Yet it had, in the mid-nineteenth century, a lively and extensive bourgeois culture; it had an influential stratum of wealthy men and women, both rentier and active. Chapters Four and Five explore the make-up and social behaviour of these people. They were less wealthy than the bourgeoisies of towns where commerce was important, such as Southampton, or than the bourgeoisies of towns dominated by private industry. The social tone of Portsmouth was perhaps less genteel than that of the dormitory towns like Kenilworth or Leamington, already by the 1840s havens for the master manufacturers of Birmingham and Coventry. Yet Portsmouth's bourgeois presence was real enough, and as these chapters show, it was expressed in a quite distinctive style of life.

A great deal of historical interest has focussed upon the place of the bourgeoisie in nineteenth century political life<sup>1</sup>. It is sometimes argued that 1832 marked a crucial

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<sup>1</sup>A. Briggs, 'Middle-Class Consciousness in British Politics, 1780-1846', Past & Present ix, 1956, pp. 65-74. P. Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', in New Left Review, xxiii, 1964.



socio-political watershed: that the admission of the 'middle class' to political citizenship pointed to their absorption in and accommodation within the status quo. After 1832, the middle class lost its radicalism and became steadily more conservative. Chapter Six uncovers the themes of political change in Portsmouth, a town where direct government influence was possible to a potentially disturbing extent, yet which had by the time of the Spithead mutiny an outstanding reputation for independence. Like most counties and many towns, Portsmouth found itself with more Tory councillors, and even M.P.s, as the century wore on. The explanations lie more in the town's own social relations, than in the growing middle class fear of working class radicalism that is sometimes seen as the cause of Liberal decline.

The most powerful reason for studying a dominant class is the fact that they dominated. (This tautology is not quite so obvious as it ought to be). Many historians have examined the ways in which the wealthy and powerful tried to impose their views upon other people: to shape ideas, to control behaviour. The last five chapters study the ways in which the bourgeoisie sought to win friends among the Portsmouth plebs, to influence people, and to order them about. In one sense, they can be read as case studies: supervision of labour, responses to poverty, provision of schooling, defining and handling criminal behaviour, reforming public morality: these are the subject matter of Chapters Seven to Eleven. But they are not just case studies; they take up areas that might be seen as central in relations between the

classes in Victorian Britain. What sort of person took part in these activities? Who was affected by them, and how? What motives impelled those involved? Throughout these last chapters, the emphasis lies upon the interplay between structures and people, stressing that those at whom an 'ideological state apparatus' was pointed were occasionally capable of dodging, or even resisting it.

This thesis, in the end, is about how the new industrial towns were governed. It was, after all, a remarkable achievement: for the first time in human history, the mass of the population was taken from the land, set to work for a wage, and housed in concentrations of unprecedented size. Despite all the fears of ruling class observers, and all the hopes of popular radicals, life was transformed without revolution, without guillotines or barricades. Within a couple of generations, the urban proletariat had become an aspect in a known and accepted landscape; even the T.U.C. dropped the policy of peasant proprietorship from its programme; industry and town life were no longer the enemy, they were a part of the future. What follows sketches out a fragment of the story.

We all leave out much more than we put in, but the gaps in this story are so glaring that something should be said at this stage. First, I say nothing about landlord-tenant relations, and although it is true that owner-occupiers were common even among working people in Portsmouth, more should have been said about this. Although land-ownership is dealt with briefly in Chapter Four, this aspect is not,

partly because of the difficulties of research and also because of the dreadful legal complications. Second, I barely mention the magistrates at all, although some material was initially collected. There are a number of recent studies of justices, and the Portsmouth material adds little that is new<sup>1</sup>. The same goes for religion, although I do refer to the effects of religion upon other activities<sup>2</sup>. No doubt other gaps will become apparent to readers who manage to make their way through the next six hundred pages; I wish them luck!

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<sup>1</sup>The most important are K. Zangerl, 'The Social Composition of the County Magistracy in England and Wales, 1831-1887', Journal of British Studies, xi, 1971, pp. 113-25; D. Foster, 'Class and County Government in Early Nineteenth Century Lancashire', Northern History ix, 1974, pp. 48-61; D. Phillips, 'The Black Country Magistracy, 1835-60. A Changing Elite and the Use of its Power', Midland History, iii 1976, pp. 161-90.

<sup>2</sup>See below, chs. v and xi.

## CHAPTER ONE

### PORTSMOUTH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Portsmouth, wrote Charles Dickens in 1838, was 'an English seaport town principally remarkable for mud, Jews, and sailors'<sup>1</sup>. His correspondent, a German by the name of Johann Heinrich Keunzel, was trying to write a biographical description of the young but already popular English novelist, and no doubt was suitably enlightened by Dickens's graphic description of the town of his birth. It would be nice to be equally brief for the purposes of this thesis, but unfortunately Dickens's succinct phrase is not even a fair description of his own birthplace, which was Landport - an area where Jews and sailors were relatively scarce at this time, and the mud was mostly in the streets. As a matter of fact, the area had a complex enough economy, and its social character was no less deeply interwoven.

Any account of Portsmouth has to start with the sea which brought the seamen, the mud and the Jews, and a good many other things besides. The area that we now know as Portsmouth is much more extensive than what Victorians knew by that name; then, Portsmouth was the small enclosed township that stood at the mouth of the Harbour, on the extreme south-west corner of Portsea Island. The Harbour itself had been a natural shelter for shipping from Roman times, but as ships grew in

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<sup>1</sup>M. House & G. Storey (eds.), The Letters of Charles Dickens, Vol 1, Oxford 1965, p.423.

size so Portchester lost in importance and the Camber gained. The small town that grew around the Camber was nourished by the decision of Richard I to develop it as a military base, granting the town its charter of incorporation in 1194. The next major spurt in growth came in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when as part of the Tudor expansion of the Navy a new dockyard was built. The Yard had to be situated outside the walled confines of Portsmouth township, although as yet nobody dared live on the exposed and unprotected Portsea Common. It was not that long since the French had burnt the town.

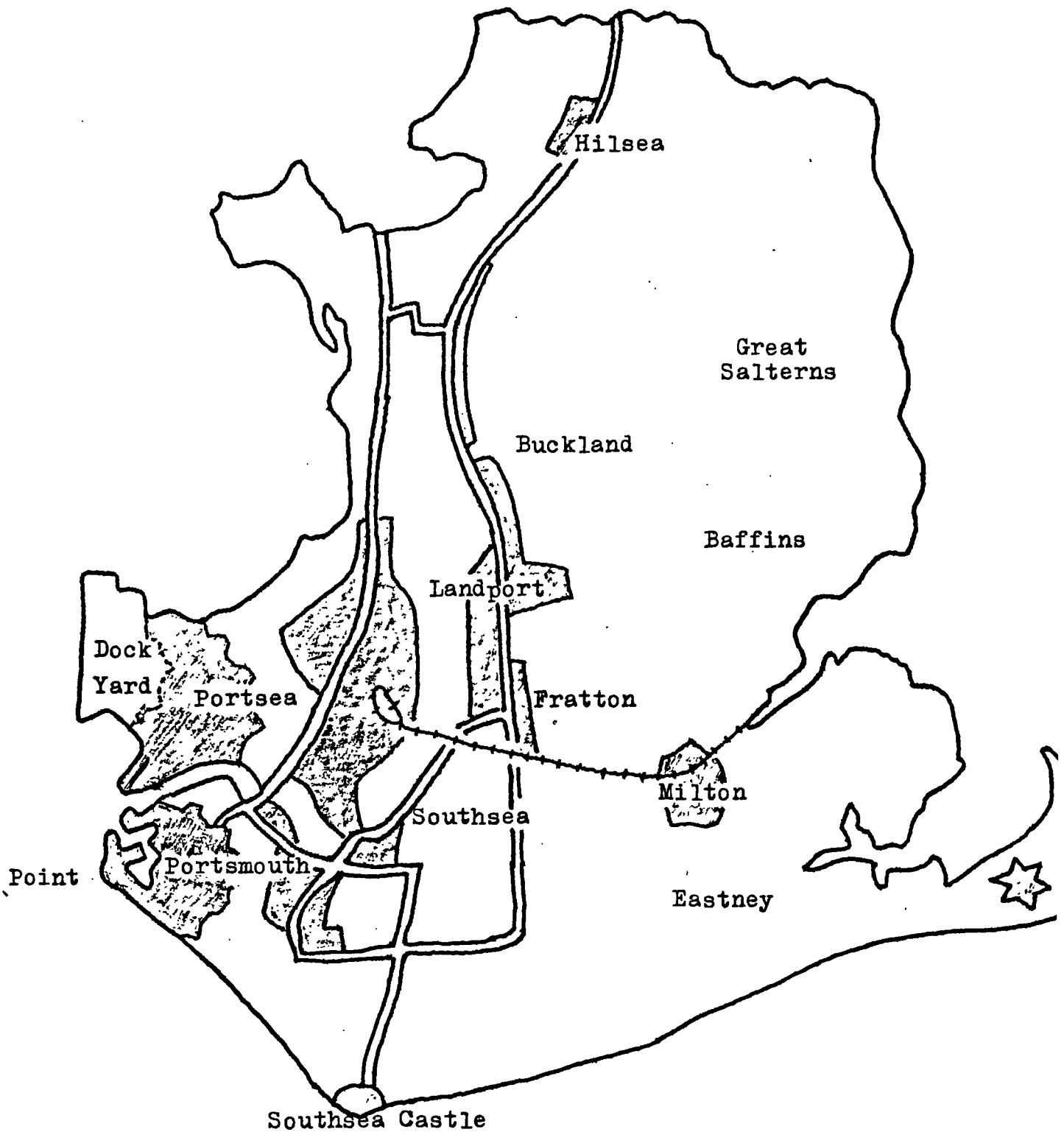
Medieval Portsmouth was a garrison and seaport. The town had played this part from time immemorial: the past was not lightly forgotten. Although Portsmouth had few published histories in the nineteenth century, plenty of Victorians took a lively interest in the town's past. It had an importance for leading citizens in locating both themselves and the community that they were part of, in relation to the imperial heritage. Henry Slight, a surgeon, councillor and borough official, wrote a number of books about Portsmouth's history, as well as contributing regularly to the local press<sup>1</sup>; J.C. Mottley, a newspaper editor, proudly wrote, in prose and verse, on Portsmouth's famous past in his attempt to attract visitors to the town, and his descriptions formed the basis for many a later guidebook<sup>2</sup>; Daniel Howard, a lawyer and

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<sup>1</sup>H. Slight, The History of Portsmouth, Portsmouth 1838; H. & J. Slight, Chronicles of Portsmouth, 1828.

<sup>2</sup>J.C. Mottley (also the Embezzlement Prevention Office of the Dockyard), The History of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, 1801.

FIGURE ONE: PORTSMOUTH IN THE 1830s.



Shaded Areas: built-up zones  
+ + + + + : Chichester Canal

prominent member of the local Whig oligarchy, collected a mass of notes for a history which he never completed<sup>1</sup>; and more unpublished materials can be found among the volumes of Sir Frederick Madden's private papers<sup>2</sup>. A sense of the past was important to these men, and it may have been stronger in Portsmouth than it was in other Victorian towns.

The main focus of this awareness of the past was, of course, upon glorious naval and military associations (although there was also a preoccupation with the origins of the Corporation). Portsmouth Harbour gave shelter to the fleet, while the Isle of Wight formed a natural barrier against both elements and enemies, enabling shipping to moor in the Solent. Unlike Langstone Harbour, to the east of Portsea Island, Portsmouth Harbour was relatively deep with a broad neck. On the other side of the neck sat Gosport, effectively a small satellite town to Portsmouth (a description that would have horrified its independent and proud inhabitants in the nineteenth century, or in the twentieth). Local pride is nicely summed up in this parody of Byron's 'Isles of Greece':

THE PORTSEA ISLE - the Portsea Isle;

Where many a British hero sprung;

Where, blessed with beauty's cheery smile,

The sons of Neptune loved and sung!

The ocean's tide surrounds thee yet;

But all save Glory's Sun is set.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Howard Papers, H.M. Add Mss 40,001.

<sup>2</sup>Madden Papers, B.M. Add Mss 33,283.

<sup>3</sup>'Portsea Isle', by G.W., in Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Literary and Scientific Register, No.4, 19 Sept. 1822.

The sour note of the last line is typical enough of the resentment that was engendered whenever the inconvenient absence of a good war led to the eclipse of glory, and thus to a loss of trade for the town.

Although the town had been a naval centre for some centuries, it was never wholly so. Richard's charter marked a deliberate royal attempt to attract a commercial population to the Island, granting a weekly market and a yearly fifteen-day Fair, 'to be free to all people, native and foreigners, free from tolls, duties, impositions, etc., and no one to be arrested for debt, or oppressed in any way during its continuance'<sup>1</sup>. The town's expansion was such that by the 1660s small houses were being erected on Point, a low-lying spit that had originally been excluded from the town, and was (to the frequent consternation of the authorities) outside its jurisdiction<sup>2</sup>. It has been estimated from the Hearth Tax returns of the 1670s that the town had close on 900 households (mostly in High Street and on Point), probably making it the twentyfirst largest town in the country<sup>3</sup>. The merchants formed a small but affluent and cohesive community that ran the town, and sympathised with radical republicanism during the Revolution (they declared for Parliament against the army in 1659); and when the Stuarts returned in 1662, ninetyseven men - merchants, brewers,

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<sup>1</sup>W.H. Saunders, The Annals of Portsmouth, 1880, p.203.

<sup>2</sup>J. Chapman, 'The Geographical Evolution of Portsmouth', in J.B. Bradbeer (ed.), Portsmouth Geographical Essays, 1974, p.7.

<sup>3</sup>P. Christie, 'An analysis of the 1674 Hearth Tax Return for Portsmouth', in D. Mottershead & R.C. Riley (eds.), Portsmouth Geographical Essays II, 1976, p.24.



wharfingers, shipowners - were expelled from the Corporation<sup>1</sup>. After a long period of government control the Corporation fell to Whig merchants and manufacturers in the 1770s, following a prolonged struggle in which the Carter family seems to have played a prominent part<sup>2</sup>.

By the 1770s, an entirely 'New Town'<sup>3</sup> had been built near the Dockyard, apparently by dockyard workers. This was to become known as Portsea, a separate township that by the late eighteenth century had its own street commission (although it lay within the Borough boundaries). By about the 1750s Portsea had overtaken Portsmouth township in terms of population, and by the end of the century had well outstripped it (see Table 1). Queen Street had developed into a shopping area, with a decidedly genteel tone: when three houses in it came up for sale during the Wars, the advertiser could claim that

Queen Street and its vicinity are very much improved, remarkably well paved, the Trade daily increasing, with other singular advantages. It is superior to most County Towns, being the largest Sea Port and having the largest Dock Yard and Ordinary in the Kingdom<sup>4</sup>.

St. George's Square gave Portsea a reasonably select residential area, where naval officers and the odd brewer lived, along with at least one supervisory employee from the Dockyard<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>D. Dymond, 'Portsmouth and the Fall of the Puritan Republic', Portsmouth Papers 11, 1971, pp.3, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Saunders, op.cit., pp.33-4; N. Surry & J. Thomas (eds.), Portsmouth Record Series: Book of Original Entries, 1731-51, 1976, Introduction.

<sup>3</sup>Defoe described Portsea as 'a kind of Suburb, or rather a New Town', A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain, 1968 edn., p.139.

<sup>4</sup>Chapman, op.cit., pp.9-10. The 'Ordinary' refers to the ships (and their crews) moored in the harbour awaiting a commission. H.T. 1 Sept. 1800; I owe this reference to Mrs. P. Sharpe.

<sup>5</sup>For the dockyardman see J. Field (ed.), 'An Early Nineteenth Century Dockyard Worker's Diary', Portsmouth Archives Review, 3, 1978.

It is not easy to say when affluent or labouring townspeople started to forsake the walled townships of Portsea and Portsmouth for the rural quiet of Fratton, Kingston or Landport (then known as 'Halfway Houses'), but by 1799 a local historian noted that merchants were buying houses in these villages<sup>1</sup>. Already we can see traces of social segregation, with Point famed for its pubs and High Street for its professionals and gentlemen<sup>2</sup>.

By the late eighteenth century Portsmouth was a large town in a nation which was still largely rural. It was also an industrial centre, in a way and to an extent that was even rarer than its high degree of urbanization: the Dockyard must have been more or less unique, outside of London. A large part of the civilian population was proletarianized: in 1715 some 1,200 men worked in the Yard as artizans and labourers, including 463 shipwrights, 80 riggers, 66 sawyers, 65 caulkers, 50 carpenters and 296 general labourers<sup>3</sup>. The peculiarity of Portsmouth must have been further enhanced by its setting in a largely rural county, with no large towns other than Southampton. The naval and military connection indeed isolated Portsmouth from the other Hampshire towns: while Southampton and Gosport were fairly well-served by stage-

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<sup>1</sup>J. Watts, History of Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport, Portsmouth 1799, p.74.

<sup>2</sup>P. Christie, op.cit., pp.30-2.

<sup>3</sup>A List of Names of Persons Subscribing the Oaths of Allegiance, Supremacy, Abjuration, and against Transubstantiation, Taken at H.M. Dockyard, 13-17 Oct. 1715, P.C.R.O. S/1/31.

coaches to one another and to Winchester, Portsmouth was linked to London and Chichester, until the rapid expansion of coaching in the 1790s<sup>1</sup>. The importance of London is, of course, self-explanatory; Chichester was a military base and also had political links with Portsmouth<sup>2</sup>.

Portsmouth was hardly cut off from the surrounding countryside, though it may have looked to the east more often than it did to the west. Large stretches of Hampshire remained open, although this was most common in the relatively undeveloped west<sup>3</sup>. The most prosperous districts were those to the north of the county, feeding their produce into the markets of Winchester and Basingstoke; although the Napoleonic and Revolutionary Wars saw new areas of downland brought into cultivation, it is not clear whether this shifted the agricultural centre of gravity towards the south<sup>4</sup>. As well as the grain and stock farming of the inlands there were smaller holdings along much of the coast, often devoted to market gardening, to small-scale cattle - and sheep-grazing. Even Portsea Island had sheep and cattle on the grass that covered the military earthworks, as well as small market gardens in the village areas, with one or two more substantial farms around Milton, Copnor and the Great Salterns.

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<sup>1</sup>M.J. Freeman, 'The Stage Coach system of South Hampshire, 1775-1851', Journal of Historical Geography, 1, 1975, p.265.

<sup>2</sup>The political relationship between Portsmouth and Chichester seems to have had a good deal to do with the Dukes of Richmond. N. Surry & J. Thomas, 'Portsmouth 1715-1730; some neglected aspects', Portsmouth Archives Review 1, 1976, pp.37-43.

<sup>3</sup>W.E. Tate, 'Field Systems and Enclosures in Hampshire', Papers & Proc. of the Hants. Field Club, xvi, 1947, p.263.

<sup>4</sup>S. Lowe, Hampshire County Elections 1734-1830, Southampton M Phil., 1971, Ch.1. See also the Sel. Cttee on Agriculture, 1836.

Such were Portsmouth's distinctive features: a large proletariat perhaps working in the dockyard; intensive urbanization, already showing signs of suburban differentiation; the predominant military and naval presence; and an agrarian environment that by 1830 was to become classical Swing territory. Each of these features was already well-established by the beginning of the nineteenth century, so that the town had a tradition of continuity that contrasts with the disruption and dislocation that was felt to accompany urbanization in the northern industrial centres. But this continuity was experienced by contemporaries as a sense of being a bastion of an enlightened imperial power. If the ships of the Royal Navy were Britain's wooden walls, the people of Portsmouth were the carpenters.

The continuity of Portsmouth's history is, however, only a relative one. The town grew rapidly throughout the nineteenth century, generally much faster than did the country's population as a whole, and on balance it grew as fast as did most other Victorian towns. Table One makes this clear, and also draws out the importance of Portsmouth's relationship with the Dockyard: the low rates of growth of the twenties and thirties reflect the long stagnation of the post-War years. The recovery of the 1840s marks the revival of activity in the Yard that was especially associated with the decision to convert the Navy to steam power; by the fifties and sixties war and fears of war led to the renewed expansion of the Yard, then its conversion to the needs of iron and steel shipbuilding.

TABLE ONE: POPULATION GROWTH, 1801-1881

Portsmouth, aggregate population		Intercensal rates of population change		
		Portsmouth	England & Wales	72 Principal Towns (U.K.)
1801	33,000			
	1801-11	27.3%	14.0%	23%
1811	42,000			
	1811-21	11.9	18.1	30
1821	47,000			
	1821-31	6.4	15.8	32
1831	50,000			
	1831-41	6.0	14.3	26
1841	53,000			
	1841-51	35.8	12.7	25
1851	72,000			
	1851-61	31.9	11.9	18
1861	95,000			
	1861-71	20.0	13.2	20
1871	114,000			
	1871-81	12.3	14.4	21
1881	128,000			

(Sources: Census Reports for Portsmouth; B.W.E. Alford, 'The economic Development of Bristol in the Nineteenth Century: An Enigma?', in P. McGrath & J. Cannon (eds.), Essays in Bristol and Gloucestershire History, Bristol, 1976, pp. 255-7).

The prominence given to the local Dockyard by the authorities, once committed to steam power and metal ships, was fortunate for the town. Portsmouth grew faster, and less jerkily, than either Plymouth or Bristol once the lean years were over.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>B.R. Mitchell & P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics, Cambridge 1962, pp.22-7. The rates of intercensal growth for Bristol ranged between 22% (1821-31) and 10% (1841-51), and for Plymouth between 29% (1841-51) and 4% (1871-81).

One very obvious consequence of population growth was that the old walled townships started to lose their monopoly of the urban discomforts, as houses and people spilled over their boundaries and tumbled into the streets of Landport and Southsea. Landport, which started life as a small, rather well-to-do village, rapidly turned into the Dockyard's overspill suburb; Southsea, originally developed as a slightly inferior artisan town, soon acquired a rather uneasy mixture of social classes. This is difficult to see from the Census

TABLE TWO: POPULATION GROWTH IN SELECTED AREAS, 1801-51

	Population 1801	Change 1851	Percentage Change
Portsmouth Township	7,839	379	4.8
Portsea Township	8,348	7,998	95.8
Landport & Southsea	10,130	16,612	164.0

Source: Census Reports for 1851, Parl. Papers 1852-3, lxxxv.

returns, which Landport and Southsea in together - a common enough identification in the mid-nineteenth century, given that these two suburbs lacked the amenities (such as they were) of the old townships, and indeed went jointly for an improvement Act. It was, until the fifties, only the more class-conscious members of each community that saw their interests as opposed. Landport was overwhelmingly populated by working men, small manufacturing traders, and by retailers.

Southsea was the home of such urban gentry as the town possessed: officers, professionals, retired businessmen, ladies of independent means. If the distinction between Landport and Southsea is lost in Table Two, however, the main pattern of growth is plain. So is the stability of the old township of Portsmouth: infilling was probably completed by the late eighteenth century, although the figures in the Table do not include the soldiers who lived in the new barracks. In Portsmouth township, the absence of growth indicates not depression, but simple necessity: hemmed in by walls, built on and filled in, no further growth was possible. Portsea, also walled, lost the New Buildings, a crowded area that had a mock Mayor and a 'Company of Snuffs' who paraded and jeered the respectable. This ungovernable 'Alsatia', a 'sort of half-gypsy community', was pulled down in 1845 and the whole area enclosed into the Dockyard<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, Portsea still had some room to expand its population, often into overcrowded lodging houses in the alleys and rows that ran at right angles to Queen Street.

The fortifications that enclosed Portsmouth and Portsea may also have hemmed in the outlook of some of their inhabitants. To the seaward, Portsmouth township was defended by walls, with small sally ports to allow entry and exit, and by the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Portsmouth Hard', The Standard, 8 Feb. 1884; W.G. Gates, Portsmouth in the Past, (1926), reprinted 1975, p.19.

King's Bastion. The Bastion abutted the Ramparts that cut Portsmouth off from Southsea and the Common; these were covered by earthworks, and on these sheep and cattle grazed, ladies and gentlemen strolled, and ill-behaved children like the young Walter Besant played. Inside the ramparts the inhabitants were cooped up after curfew until the gates opened at the sound of the morning gun. There were by 1850 five gates: one at the Town Quay, one leading to Landport, one at the Spur Redoubt and leading to Southsea, and two opening into Portsea (which was also walled). The walls made it easier for the inhabitants of the townships to forget that they were of the same Borough as the suburbs without; when Thomas Croxton, owner of the artizan town at Southsea, tried to attract the attentions of the Portsmouth street commissioners, he experienced not a little difficulty.

High walls surrounded the Dockyard and shielded it from the view of the casual passer-by; the curious passer-by could always get permission to walk around it. No other industry ever came close to competing with the Yard's predominance in this period. In 1851 the Yard's permanent workforce alone came to 2,786 men, amounting to over twenty per cent of the town's occupied adult male civilian population<sup>1</sup>; by 1871 there were 3,137 men, or just over fifteen per cent of the occupied civilian male adults<sup>2</sup>. And this was at a time of considerable

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<sup>1</sup>Navy Estimates, 1851-2, P.P. 1852 xxix, p.163.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 1870-71, P.P. 1870 xlv, p.43.



retrenchment. There was little in the way of private shipbuilding, although we have to remember that those denoted in the Census as 'shipbuilders' did not include the labourers, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, and so on that worked in shipyards.

TABLE THREE: MAIN INDUSTRIAL OCCUPATIONS AS PERCENTAGE OF OCCUPIED ADULT CIVILIAN MALE/POPULATION, 1851 and 1871

	1851	1871
1. Shipbuilding	18.7	19.0
2. Engineering & Metals	4.6	5.2
3. Clothing	8.7	7.4
4. Transport	11.1	10.3
5. Building	12.8	13.4
6. Food and Drink	3.5	3.2

TABLE FOUR: MAIN INDUSTRIAL OCCUPATIONS AS PERCENTAGE OF OCCUPIED ADULT FEMALE POPULATION, 1851 and 1871.

1. Clothing	38.6	31.4
2. Food and drink	0.2	0.5

Sources: Census Tables.

The same difficulty applies to brewing, where large numbers of carters, labourers, bricklayers and so on were employed, but would have been returned in the census categories in such a way as to make them indistinguishable from building or transport workers. The main trends are clear, though, and these show that the majority of male industrial workers worked in transport, shipbuilding or the construction industry, while the women worked in the clothing trades.

Not all working people were employed in industry. This is a fact which is probably forgotten by historians more often than it need be. Retail occupations claimed a large part of the workforce, especially in a town like Portsmouth where the presence of large numbers of sailors and soldiers created a demand for pubs and shops to quench their thirsts, feed their hunger, and clothe their nakedness. The retail sector was not only an important employer, but as Table Five shows, it was a growing one, for women as well as men. General labour seems to have been a declining category, although this may be due to improved classification by the census enumerators. The government or the Borough were as yet small but growing in their importance as employers. Domestic and other servants made up an enormous share of the occupied female population, although it is an index of the importance of the clothing trades that in 1851 they employed more women than were 'in service'.

So far we have concentrated on 'the occupations of the people'. How did the more affluent citizens earn their livings? One

TABLE FIVE: MAIN SERVICE OCCUPATIONS AS PERCENTAGE OF  
OCCUPIED CIVILIAN ADULT POPULATION, 1851 and 1871.

a) MALES	1851	1871
1. Retail	12.7	14.2
2. General labour	11.0	7.5
3. Local or national government (including police and prison officers)	1.4	4.1
4. Service	2.0	1.9
b) FEMALES		
1. Retail	11.5	14.5
2. Service	37.5	42.6

Source: Census

TABLE SIX: PROFESSIONS, COMMERCE AS PERCENTAGE OF OCCUPIED  
CIVILIAN ADULT POPULATION, 1851 and 1871

a) MALES	1851	1871
1. Professions (excluding teachers)	2.7	2.6
2. Commerce	0.6	1.0

Source: Census

answer is that they did not all 'earn' a living: in 1851 185 men and 733 women were said to be of 'independent' means, and in 1871 160 men and 1,107 women were so described. But it seems likely, to anticipate for a moment the arguments of Chapter Four, that most of the oisifs lived off annuities, rents or interest from the funds rather than from locally created profits. The proportion employed in commerce seems almost negligible, although this does not mean that they did not include some extremely influential and (by local standards) affluent citizens. The size of the professional stratum also seems to have been smaller than in many towns of comparable standing, such as Southampton<sup>1</sup>, although this was probably compensated to some extent by the army and navy officers that settled around Southsea.

It is difficult to be precise about the extent of the military and naval presence in the town. Whether you approached Portsmouth by land or by sea, that presence was immediately visible. If by land, the defensive Hilsea Lines protected Portsdown Creek, and nearby stood an army barracks. If by sea, Fort Cumberland at the easternmost tip of the Island was manned by Marines; at the mid-point stood Southsea Castle; to the west, at the mouth of the Harbour, stood the Blockhouse,

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<sup>1</sup>In Southampton, professionals as a percentage of the civilian adult male population were:

1851	2.7%
1871	3.2%

seawalls, and Roundhouse. Portsmouth township possessed barracks as well, and of course the Harbour was invariably thronged with ships. Picket guards patrolled the streets of Portsmouth township at night, occasionally dealing with scuffle in Landport or Portsea, and until the 1860s troops stood guard over the dockyard as well. The 1851 census, for example, showed 3,363 members of the Navy and 2,592 of the Army to be in the town; 2,575 of the seamen were on board ships in the harbour on census night, and 2,728 soldiers and marines were in barracks; the rest were living in houses in the town. But clearly the exact numbers of servicemen in the area at any given time would depend upon the number of regiments and ships that happened to be stationed in the garrison or passing through it, and this varied enormously from time to time.

Already the inheritor of centuries of growth linked to its naval and military role, Portsmouth grew enormously during the nineteenth century, quadrupling its population between 1801 and 1871. The growth was not steady, linked as it was to the varying fortunes of political exigency and naval policy.

Indeed, the unevenness had its physical manifestations. In the two walled townships, the outlines of the main streets were plain enough, but behind them huddled the small homes and tenements of the poor, often built of wood, and rarely more than two storeys high; even in High Street, one-storey buildings were not unknown<sup>1</sup>, while in 1847 it seems that only one building

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the drawing in Gates, op.cit. p.51. John Pounds' house in High Street was found, when it was demolished, to actually consist of a 'filled-in' alleyway.

in that street - the Railway offices - towered above its fellows at four storeys. Windmills dotted around the borough could be seen above the roofs of the low houses - the older of which had been built low at the behest of the garrison commander, so as to maintain his field of fire. The nearer the Harbour, the denser the buildings became, while the north and the east of the Island remained agricultural land until the present century. The north and east were peripheral; the west, with the Harbour and dockyard, were the heart of Portsmouth.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE STATE AND ITS INDUSTRIES

Was there ever such an animal as the 'typical' Victorian city? Probably not; each town, although affected by the general processes of social and economic change, experienced them in different ways. Portsmouth, however, may have been even less representative of the 'typical' than were most towns, and what made it so unusual was the role of the State in local life. It was the largest employer in the locality: apart from the Dockyard, there was also the Gunwharf at Portsea and the Victualling Yard at Gosport (where it had been moved in 1828 after the authorities discovered that the pigs of the Portsmouth workers were growing fat on pilfered biscuit meal<sup>1</sup>). The Yard was by far the largest of these units, and the present chapter accordingly concentrates upon the Government's shipbuilding operations. The workforce in the Yard, although dominated by the skilled shipwrights, contained a number of groups, and it is necessary to examine their contribution to the Yard's activities, as well as the ways that they experienced changes in their work processes over time. The size and diversity of the Yard's operations created problems of administration and management, and this chapter goes on to consider the Admiralty's attempts to overcome these. Lastly, the peculiar economic context of the

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<sup>1</sup>See R.C. Riley, 'The Industries of Portsmouth in the Nineteenth Century,' Portsmouth Papers 25, 1976, p.17.

Yard's activities is discussed: that is, the fact that it did not produce for a competitive market, but for direct consumption by the employer, the State.

To contemporaries, the overwhelming fact about the Dockyard was its size. By 1814 the Yard had five building slips, and six repair docks, as well as specialised workshops where sails, ropes, metal fittings, anchors, masts, capstans, pulley blocks and so on were made. The buildings, docks and slips had occupied some 73 acres in 1761, roughly 100 acres by 1809<sup>1</sup>. By 1847 there were eight docks<sup>2</sup>, with 35 acres of Portsea being enclosed into the Yard in 1845 to 46<sup>3</sup>. By the mid-sixties the Yard was 116 acres in area, with 11 docks; as well as the old basin, there was a purpose-built basin for steam ships attached to the 'Steam Factory'. A Select Committee reported in 1864 on the inadequacy of this accommodation, and it was decided to extend the Yard by a further 178 acres, building seven new docks and two more basins - a programme of works that seems to have survived the return of a Liberal government in 1868<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>G. Rose Papers, Vol. 5, B.M. Add Mss 42, 776, f.53.

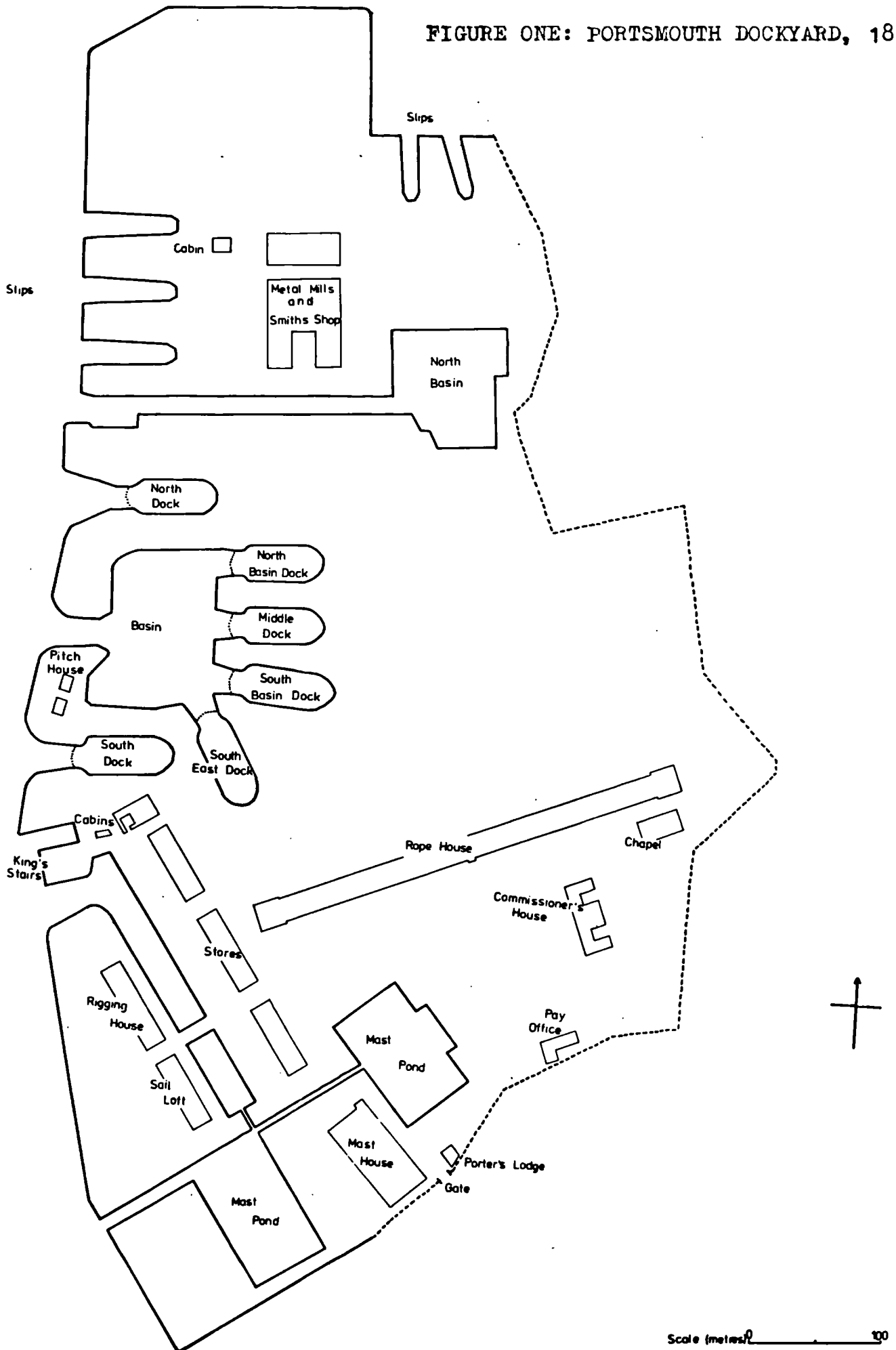
<sup>2</sup>Rep. Sel. Committee on Army, Navy and Ordnance Estimates, Parl. Papers 1847-48 xxi, Pt.1, p.xlv.

<sup>3</sup>Returns Relating to the Navy, Parl. Papers 1861 xxxviii, p.143.

<sup>4</sup>HT 28 Aug. 1867; First Rep. S.C. on Dockyards, Parl. Papers 1864 viii, esp. pp.iii-iv; according to Civil Service Review, Vol.1, No.29, Nov. 1873, 94 of the 178 acres were reclaimed from mudlands in the Harbour, while the remainder was enclosed from Pesthouse Fields.



FIGURE ONE: PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD, 181



Source: P.R.O., ADM 140/555.

The figures themselves give some idea of how large the Yard was, when compared with the small workshops that contributed so much, and gave Britain the nickname of 'Workshop of the World'. Contemporaries were impressed by the scale of the Yard, Dugdale describing it as something that was remarkable because it was larger than human life:

Everything here is, indeed, upon a weighty scale; and, abstractly considered, the efforts of human industry seem too weak and impotent to achieve the important works that are here displayed <sup>1</sup>.

The Post Office Directory was not above marvelling at the size and complexity of the Yard; the anchor forges, it thought, 'seem to realize the complicated honours of the Cyclopean cave'<sup>2</sup>. The metaphors suggest an air of unreality, a feeling that humanity was dwarfed by such gigantic works. Such was the impression of visitors; locals knew better. 'All day long', Walter Besant wrote in one of his novels, there was 'the busy sound of the Yard. To strangers and visitors it was just a confused and deafening noise. When you got to know it, you distinguished half-a-dozen distinct sounds'<sup>3</sup>. Familiarity bred, if not understanding, at least acceptance of the Yard as simply another piece of the locality. Yet it was large, and this was immediate and obvious to a visitor.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Dugdale, Curiosities of Great Britain, Vol.2 1835, p.1312.

<sup>2</sup> P.O. Directory, Hants, 1852, p.1281.

<sup>3</sup> W. Besant & J. Rice, By Celia's Arbour: A Tale of Portsmouth Town, 1888, p.34.

The workforce was also immense. Only a few employers in the northern industrial towns, such as Platts of Oldham (with something like 1,300 employees)<sup>1</sup>, could compare with the Royal Dockyards by the 1850s. In Manchester, only five firms employed more than 1,000 workers in the 1840s, and these were frequently in separate mills in different parts of the city<sup>2</sup>. At its lowest point, in the early 1830s, the Yard workforce did not fall below 1,500 men (so far as can be discovered), and the total wages and salary bill was over £100,000 even in the worst years. Once more, the precise figures are illuminating, although their reliability varies, and the meaning is confused by the distinction between 'established' and 'hired' men. Broadly speaking, the 'established' men were the permanent workmen, retained through thick and thin; 'hired' men were theoretically temporary men, dismissed in slack periods, although in some years a steady rate of activity ensured that 'hired' men were retained, being symbolically dismissed and re-hired at the start of each financial year. In general, the Yard authorities preferred to establish craftsmen, and to recruit most labourers onto the 'hired' list, but this did not prevent a minority of labourers from being established and a minority of craftsmen being hired.

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<sup>1</sup>J. Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution, 1974, p.295 fn.11.

<sup>2</sup>V.A.C. Gatrell, 'Labour, Power, and the size of firms in Lancashire Cotton in the second quarter of the nineteenth century', Econ. Hist. Rev. 2nd Ser., xxx, 1977, p.103.

TABLE ONE: NUMBERS EMPLOYED IN PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD AT  
SELECTED DATES, 1820-1870<sup>1</sup>

	Established only	Total workforce
1820		3,159
1825		2,526
1830		2,079
1834	1,600	1,545
1841	1,860	2,197
1845	2,010	2,246
1848		3,383
1855	1,848	
1860	2,713	4,633
1866		5,358
1870		4,004

Sources: 1820, 1825: Yard Pay Books, P.R.O. ADM 42/1377, 1390.  
1830: Copies of Admiralty Orders, 29 Mar. 1830, Parl. Papers 1831-32, xvii, p.576.  
1834, 1841, 1845, 1848: Select Committee on Army, Navy and Ordnance Estimates, Parl. Papers 1847-48, xxi pt.I, pp.778-85.  
1855: Admiralty In-Letters, P.R.O. ADM 89/1, 28 Oct. 1854.  
1860: Return of the Number of Workmen Employed in the Royal Dockyards, Parl. Papers 1860 xlii, p.282; Report of the Royal Commission into the Control & Management of H M Naval Yards, Parl. Papers 1861, xxvi, p.357.  
1866: Speech by W H Stone, M.P., reported in H.T. 29 Jan. 1870.  
1870: Ibid.

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<sup>1</sup>These figures are different from those found in R.C. Riley, op.cit., pp.7 & 9, where the source given is the Horne Mss in P.C.R.O., 404A. It is not clear where Horne got his figures from, so I have preferred to construct my own based upon primary sources.

Despite the rather fragmentary and possibly unreliable nature of the statistics used to compile Table One, it is apparent that the Yard was unusually large. The level of employment in it was, at least for hired men, capable of sudden fluctuation, particularly in periods of government retrenchment. Necessarily, such retrenchment reverberated through the entire town: 'times are so very much altered and the discharges from the Dockyard so great it strikes a gloom in the whole place', wrote the Water Company's agent in 1816<sup>1</sup>. Although the impact of the Peace was softened by the need to dismantle or de-commission ships, there were immediate reductions, and mass dismissals were sporadically reported in the local press for the next few years. Among the first to go were men who had a reputation for absenteeism: the Admiralty picked out those who had lost over seventy days in the previous year for discharge in March 1816, ordering three hundred men to leave with one week's pay as a gratuity. Among them were 94 shipwrights and one hundred carpenters or sawyers.<sup>2</sup> The Admiralty tried to retain skilled men where possible, by reducing the number of hours worked, and by superannuating older workmen where possible; between 1813 and 1820, perhaps as many as 1,500 men left the Yard. Entire grades (such as the Quartermen, who led the gangs of shipwrights and caulkers) were abolished.

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<sup>1</sup>By 1817, arrears by customers amounted to almost half the Company's annual revenue, by 1818 almost two-thirds. M.E.J. Hallett, Economic and Social Aspects of the Piped Water Supply in Portsmouth 1800-1860, C.N.A.A. M. Phil, 1970, pp.152-62.

<sup>2</sup>Hants Courier, 18, 25 Mar. 1816; H.T. 11 Mar. 1816.

Skilled men could be reduced in status to labourers<sup>1</sup>.

The reductions of the immediate post-war period did not take place within the context of any overall attempt to reform the Admiralty. There were one or two minor pieces of 'economical reform': the Transport Board was abolished and its business transferred to the Navy Board, apart from its medical functions which went to the Victualling Board; the salaried Quartermen were replaced by waged Leading Men, who had an allowance of 2/6d a week more than the men in the gangs. Both the Transport Board, set up by Pitt in 1793, and the principle of paying Quartermen by salary (thus reducing their interest in cheating the piece-rate system), were themselves inspired by the principle of 'economical reform'<sup>2</sup>. One's impression is that attempts at economy were piecemeal, and inspired by no such system of carefully thought-out principles as came to inform the recommendations of the Commissioners for Revising the Public Accounts in the 1790s<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>13, 31 July 1822, Navy Board In-Letters, P.R.O. ADM 106/1891.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. A. Briggs, Age of Improvement, 1959, p.111; N. MacLeod, 'The Shipwright Officers of the Royal Dockyards, Mariner's Mirror, xi, 1925, p.360.

<sup>3</sup>The Commissioners' arguments, it is suggested, 'seem to have been derived from the bureaucratic model of the Excise, the rationalism and form of equity law, and the invigorated consciousness of the upper-middle class. The result was a new bureaucratic ideology of public service'. J. Torrance, 'Social Class and Bureaucratic Innovation; The Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts, 1780-1787', Past & Present 78, 1978, p.80.

The next major onslaught upon the Dockyards was introduced by the reform government in the early 1830s. The Whig First Lord of the Admiralty was the forty-year-old Sir James Graham, member of a family of Tory squires from Netherby<sup>1</sup>. In the first place, Graham emphasised the principle of administrative efficiency and responsibility. He ended the old independent Boards, abolishing the Victualling and Navy Boards, and placing responsibility for all naval affairs in the hands of the Admiralty Lords. Each Lord was made responsible for one Department, overseeing the five permanent departmental heads (Accountant-General, Storekeeper General, Comptroller of Victualling, Physician of the Navy, and - with responsibility for the Dockyards - the Surveyor of the Navy). Graham was also motivated by economical principles: he claimed to have reduced the Navy estimates by over one million pounds, saving £74,000 a year in the civil establishments alone. Moreover, he refused to exercise the patronage attached to his position, turning all appointments over to the Admiralty Board<sup>2</sup>.

In the dockyard towns there were social costs to be paid for all this efficiency. In Portsmouth, the discharges caused

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<sup>1</sup>The chief sources on Graham's life are C.S. Parker (ed.), Life and Letters of Sir James Graham, 2nd Baronet of Netherby, 1792-1861, 2 Vols. 1907; J.T. Ward, Sir James Graham, 1967. For the reforms of 1830-34 see Sir John H. Briggs, Naval Administrations, 1827 to 1892, 1897, ch.iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ward, pp.125-8; Parker, 146-52. The old Boards are well described in P.K. Crimmin, Admiralty Administration 1783-1806, London M. Phil 1967, ch. vi.

TABLE TWO: WORKFORCE OF PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD, 1830-1834

1830	2,079
1831	2,002
1832	1,867
1833	1,600
1834	1,563

Sources: Factories Inquiry Commission, Supplementary Report I, PP. 1834 xix, p.56; S.C. on Estimates, PP.1847-48, xxi Pt.I, p.lii.

enormous ill-feeling, which was not confined to the rancour of vested interests. A letter from a local radical demanding the discharge of 'the sinecurist and the pensioner, and the Dockyard men may be continued', was printed in the Telegraph, whose editor however denied that the discharges would affect any 'man of fair character....The old and feeble, the lazy and incompetent, will be the first to feel the effects'<sup>1</sup>. Even the Telegraph, though, could not quite stomach the employment of convicts in the Yard while 'honest workmen' were dismissed<sup>2</sup>. John Bonham Carter, the town's Whig M.P., supported a petition against the reductions, and added (no doubt with some feeling):

Persons who are not resident <sup>in</sup> towns where the dock yards are situated, can have no idea of the feeling which is excited in the minds of the people, at beholding convicted felons constantly working, while free and honest men are unable to procure employment <sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 6 Feb. 1832.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Mirror of Parliament, 1833, p.1223.



The bitterness was not entirely without foundation: in early 1830 the Yard men had accepted the abolition of the daily chip money (a payment given in lieu of the right to carry away broken pieces of wood, which the Admiralty had found 'in its principle objectionable') in return for a promise that there would be no discharges or wage reductions<sup>1</sup>, and a promise from Graham to Bonham Carter that the 'stain' of convict labour would be discontinued was quietly forgotten<sup>2</sup>.

Graham's reforms reduced the size of the Yard by perhaps five hundred men, and undermined the confidence of the remainder in the Whig administration. It could be said that his reforms, together with the abolition of chip money, indicated principles which may have derived from 'capitalist' political economy, but this would be a considerable oversimplification. Graham was not averse to interfering with the market price for labour by employing convicts, and indeed told the House that he was loath to get rid of the felons immediately 'because I fear that the effect of such a proceeding would be to raise the price of labour'<sup>3</sup>. Graham's model enterprise was not likely to have been derived from the factory (was anybody's at this time?) but from other

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<sup>1</sup>Admiralty Order, 9 Jan. 1830, in Parl. Papers 1831-32 xvii, p.573.

<sup>2</sup>Graham made this promise during the debate on the Estimates, 15 April 1833, Mirror of Parliament p.1224.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

government departments, and from his own experience as a rather go-ahead gentleman farmer<sup>1</sup>.

Perhaps in response to the resentment caused by the convicts, they declined from 650 in the 1830s to 330 in the late 1840s<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, technological changes reduced the part played by unskilled labour. By the 'forties, the Yard was steadily expanding once more, as the shift to a steam Navy coincided with the advent of a Tory government. The steam factory was first discussed in 1842, and land was brought into the Yard for its construction in 1845; a similar system was planned for the Dockyard at Devonport, which was to have a foundry and basin at Keyham Point. The workers in the Steam Factory from the outset were hired men who were not entitled to the benefits of superannuation, sick pay, etc. that established men possessed (see below, p.389)<sup>3</sup>. By 1850 some 490 men worked in the factory, rising to 860 during the Crimean War, and reaching a peak of 940 in 1867 before the Liberal government's reduction to around 750<sup>4</sup>.

The emergence and growing importance of the steam factory indicates the changing technology of shipbuilding, the impact

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<sup>1</sup>See David Spring's account, 'A Great Agricultural Estate: Netherby under Sir James Graham, 1820-1845', Agricultural History, xxix 1955.

<sup>2</sup>S.C. on...Estimates, op.cit., p.lii. 21 Oct. 1847, ADM 7/594.

<sup>3</sup>Navy Estimates 1849-50, P.R.O. ADM 181/60.

<sup>4</sup>Figures based upon Navy Estimates published in Parl. Papers and listed in Bibliography.

of which will be discussed later in this chapter. War and politics too continued to alter the levels of employment in the Yard, with war favouring the shipbuilding worker slightly more than the chance of a Tory government. For much of this period, the published Navy Estimates unfortunately do not specify how many hired men were employed in each Yard, other than in the factory. Even the Establishment levels, however, may give us some idea of the fluctuations brought by war (Table Three). After the war came a mild shake-out, but with the return of a Tory government under Disraeli in 1866, itself following on a period of Palmerstonian paranoia about the French, the Dockyard entered a brief period of prosperity. Once again, this was connected with technological change, this time involving the shift from wood to metal shipbuilding. In 1864-65 the Navy Estimates allowed over £350,000 in wages and salaries for the Portsmouth Yard - over £6,800 each week of the year<sup>1</sup>. On top of this the Civil Engineer's department was allowed over £60,000 for buildings and works.

The boom of the mid-sixties was shattered as surely as if it had been a part of the trade cycle. The return of a Liberal government in 1868, with Childers at the Admiralty, marked a sudden return to the principles of national economy. The 1867-68 Estimates allowed for 2,175 established and 2,870 hired men in the Yard and Factory; those of 1868-69 allowed

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<sup>1</sup>Estimates, Parl. Papers 1864 xxxvii, pp.40-8.

TABLE THREE: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD,  
1852-53 to 1858-59.

	Yard	Factory
1852-3	2,320	466
1853-4	2,320	588
1854-5	2,351	657
1855-6	2,543	850
1856-7	2,543	860
1857-8	2,543	785
1858-9	2,572	739
1859-60	2,593	739

Source: Naval Estimates. It should be repeated that these are (at least for the Yard, if not the Factory, an index to employment rather than actual figures of employment, since the number of hired men increased rapidly in times of high activity; moreover, the figures were projections based upon predicted needs, rather than post hoc accounts.

for 2,075 established and 1,390 hired men. Once again the sense of bitterness emerged, and once again the Telegraph had the painful and embarrassing task of distancing itself from an action whose principles it admired. An 1868 editorial is probably typical:

There can be no doubt that...in diminishing the artificers of wood when the wooden era had passed away, the Admiralty did nothing more than was called for by the circumstances of the time, or than what any private trader would have done. But my Lords contrived to make a necessary action unnecessarily painful by the manner in which it was performed <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 29 Aug. 1868.

They were hard times, and the Admiralty, though unable to interfere with the principles of political economy, did agree to take some surplus labour off the market. Accordingly, several hundred Portsmouth families joined men and women from Woolwich and Plymouth in the long voyage by troopship to Canada<sup>1</sup>.

Although there was a steady expansion between 1820 and 1870 in the size of the Yard and of its workforce, this expansion was not steady. Although the position of the Yard was very different from that of private employers producing for the open market, and subject to the fluctuations of the trade cycle, there was never uninterrupted growth. In the early 1830s, the late fifties and early sixties, and strongly in the late sixties, the Yard was as depressed as any hungry cotton factory. The town too shared the depression; it was all very well for the Telegraph to appeal to the instincts of 'any private trader' in the abstract; but the actual private traders of nineteenth century Portsmouth were not necessarily more impressed with capitalist rational - bureaucratic principles than they were with the evidence of their own cash registers. The graph on page 36 shows the aggregate sums voted by Parliament in wages and salaries for Portsmouth dockyard (actually an underestimate, since they do not include the earnings of men employed by private contractors or in the Civil Engineer's department). The fact is

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<sup>1</sup>See below, Ch.ix.

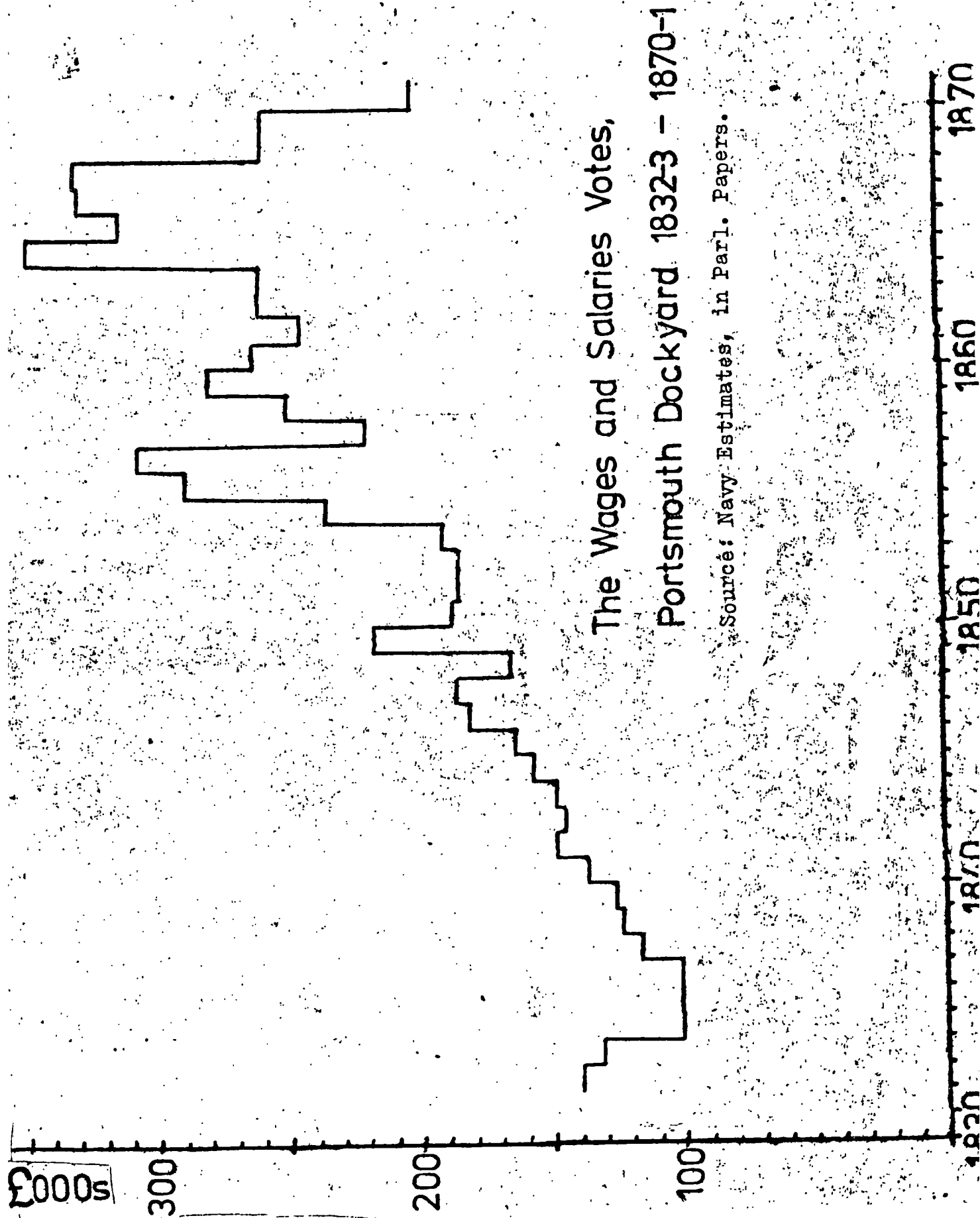
that the bulk of these wages and salaries were spent with the shopkeepers and publicans and landowners of Portsmouth.

It has already been suggested that one factor affecting employment levels was technological change. Like all other industries, shipbuilding was subjected to the constant pressures of mechanization and cost-cutting, and the Admiralty was by no means immune from the general pressures. At the same time, the nature of the product itself changed. Firstly, the steam engine was widely adopted, at first alongside sail and later on its own, at first driving paddles and later driving the screw propellor. The other great technological shift was the transition away from wooden shipbuilding to iron, and later steel. In both cases the Admiralty was slow to make the change, and often did so with less than delirious enthusiasm. The caution came not just out of sentimental conservatism, although this was certainly present: in 1827 ships' carpenters met at Portsea to complain that 'It is derogatory to the position of Warrant Officers in H.M. Dockyards to have the charge of the enginemen and their stores'<sup>1</sup>, and tales of snobbery towards begrimed engineer officers (commissioned from 1847) in the wardroom were legion. But as well as snobbery and conservatism there was a certain justifiable caution. What would be the impact of a shell or cannon-ball upon an iron ship? No one knew, and it seemed

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<sup>1</sup>M.A. Lewis, The Navy in Transition 1814-1864: A social history, 1965, p.199.

FIGURE TWO.



probable that once holed below the water-line, it would sink far more rapidly than a wooden vessel. How would the Yards prevent iron ships from rusting? What would the cost be of these changes? How could the Admiralty ensure a steady supply of coal to ships cruising off the Chinese coast, or stationed in the Pacific? These were unanswered questions; if the experts were unable to agree on the merits of different methods of shipbuilding - and the Transactions of the Institute of Naval Architects from 1860 suggest that they were not - then how could politicians and aging Admirals be expected to make a snap decision?<sup>1</sup>

How far did technological changes affect the organization of the Yard's labour process, especially the shipwrights' traditional predominance? Although the steam factory, and the trend to metal shipbuilding, were the two most dramatic changes in the Yard's technology, there was a fairly persistent drive to mechanization throughout the trades. Most likely to be affected were those trades whose tasks were repetitive and predictable, such as the blacksmiths and the sawyers. The bulk of the work in the Yard, however, took place on board the ships in dock or on the slip or afloat, carried out largely by shipwrights and their ancillary trades; subservient

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. the aggressive argument of E.J. Reed, 'On Iron-cased Ships of War', Trans. Inst. of Naval Architects iv, 1863, pp.31-50. For problems with paddle-steamers see letter of 7 Feb. 1839, P.R.O. ADM 1/3440. Also N.A.M. Rodger, Naval Policy and Cruiser Design 1865-1890, Oxford D Phil, 1974, ch.ii; R. Blake, Disraeli, 1966, pp.484-5.



to the ship-based trades were the labourers, whose tasks were sometimes liable to mechanization with the adoption of a crane or a tramway (innovations that created new 'semi-skilled' jobs rather than less skilled ones). The work of the shipwrights was much the same in 1860 as it had been in the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the shipwrights continued to form the largest group within the workforce throughout this period (see Table Four).

TABLE FOUR: SHIPWRIGHTS AND THEIR APPRENTICES AS PROPORTION OF YARD WORKFORCE:

1820-1870	% of total workforce
1820	35.6
1825	38.8
1830	39.8
1834	41.4
1841	34.7
1848	34.6
1860	30.0
1869	35.7

Sources: As for Table One, except 1869, taken from H.T., 10 Mar. 1869).

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<sup>1</sup>Described in some detail by D. Wilson, Government Dockyard Workers in Portsmouth 1793-1815, Warwick Ph.D, 1975, pp 152-88; also W. Falconer, A Universal Dictionary of the Marine, 1815, pp.456-66 (a reference that I owe to Dr. R. Knight).

The shipwrights were assisted on the job by caulkers, generally with the same rates of pay, and responsible for filling in the seams between the timbers and planks (later, between the plates of metal). These were a smaller group, something like one to every ten shipwrights in 1830 and in 1860. Joiners worked both on board ship and in their own workshop; in 1830 there were about one tenth as many joiners as shipwrights, but by 1860 they had increased to perhaps one eighth as many. Nevertheless, they were clearly less central than the shipwrights, who shaped the planks and timbers, set the frame up on the slips, set up the blocks that held ships in place in the repair docks, and handled the wood used to make or repair ships. They did not go so far as in some Tyneside yards, where shipwrights refused to let labourers even carry wood around the place, but they did possess an unchallenged role in wooden shipbuilding; by the 1860s there were complaints that shipwrights were hogging work that should rightfully be performed by unskilled men, such as carrying wood and metal around the ships.

The predominance of the shipwrights in the labour process was based partly upon their skill, partly upon the tough and occasionally dangerous nature of the work. The basic tool of the job was the adze, a kind of axe with the head at right angles to the haft rather than running vertically down it. Swung down towards the wood, between the feet, its heavy sharp cutting edge threatened to slice toes as well as timber. There were other tools, including the axe, and borers of differing shapes and sizes; these can still be seen in places

like the Bucklers' Hard Museum which possesses a set of old shipwright's and caulker's tools. To work at the sides of the ships, it was necessary to erect platforms on rickety wooden scaffolding. These too were dangerous: Samuel James Palmer, a shipwright, was killed when he slipped off a platform into a dry dock while repairing the Rodney. The scaffolding was, reported the Telegraph, erected according to a 'most primitive' system; there had been 'no alteration from the time of Noah'<sup>1</sup>.

A sense of timelessness arose from the craft tradition that characterized skilled shipbuilders as a community. In the case of the Dockyards this craft tradition involved a steadiness of pace, and a sense of capability, that was recognised both by men and by officers. There was no rush because there would be no need for it. This occasionally surprised visitors, who expected to see a hurly-burly in this great naval arsenal:

One sees such a turmoil outside the gates, and reads so constantly of the activity in the dockyards, that I was quite surprised with the apparent paucity of ouvriers; and even in the factories the men looked as unconcerned and the hammers fell just as regularly as though a European conflagration were not just at hand [this was in March 1854] 2.

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<sup>1</sup>The men and officers of the Yard subscribed some £100 to Palmer's widow: H.T. 5, 12 Feb., 4 Mar. 1844.

<sup>2</sup>Anon, Four Days at Portsmouth on the Eve of War, March 1854, 1855.

Naturally the Dockyard officers were untroubled by such inactivity as long as they were not pressured into recognizing its existence; and a great deal of the reforming drive of the late fifties and the sixties was directed at ways of making the Yard officers a little more urgent and thorough in their supervision of the men. The persistence of the craft tradition, with its emphasis upon quality rather than quantity (shared, it will be argued below, by some officers), led the Yards to become a metaphor for laziness in the way that British Leyland is today: in one joke a horse working in the Yard falls into a hole and cannot be moved out again; the men stand around trying different methods of raising the horse, until one has the idea of ringing the bell that signals leaving-off time; the horse promptly climbs out, and walks off to the stables<sup>1</sup>.

The Yards' reputation for laziness was partly due to the fact that, while the property of the nation, they were judged according to a theory which valued the 'ideal type' of the private entrepreneur. P. Barry, writing in the 1860s, thought that 'Sloth...or, let the plain truth be told, dishonest idling - that infirmity of our nature, wherever and whenever it can be safely practiced - seriously and all but hopelessly complicates the dockyard labour question'. He attributed the 'safety' of idling in Portsmouth Yard to

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<sup>1</sup>Civil Service Review vol.1 No.30, 22 Nov. 1873.

the absence of the profit motive, awareness of which ensures attention to their duty by private shipbuilding workers who fear the consequences of their employer's bankruptcy: the Dockyards 'are without that motive which alone binds private employers and employed together'<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps Barry was right: there was no need to extract a profit from the workforce or to produce rapidly for the market. The attempt to produce custom-built high-quality vessels for the Navy, reduced the amount of pressure upon the Admiralty to systematically confront the question of craft control over the pace of work. Instead, it was approached in a variety of ad hoc ways. Some of these are discussed in the chapter on Trade Unionism (Chapter VII), but one of these was an attempt to remove unnecessary jobs such as timber handling from the shipwrights, and place them in the labourers' province. The two questions asked by the Admiralty Committee on Dockyard Economy after the Crimean War concerned the 'subdivision of labour' and the introduction of machinery<sup>2</sup>. All it could think of with regard to the shipwrights' work was the reintroduction of a semi-skilled grade of scaffolding erectors and general shipwrights' helpers (the scavelmen), and the greater use of labourers on

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<sup>1</sup>P. Barry, Dockyard Economy and Naval Power, 1863 pp.49-50; see the same author's Dockyards and Private Shipyards of the Kingdom, 1863.

<sup>2</sup>It is worth looking at both the evidence, and the Report, Parl. Papers 1859, Sess. 2, xviii.

unskilled tasks done at present by shipwrights<sup>1</sup>. Nobody could think of any way in which mechanization might help.

One interesting side-product of craft control over the pace, and often over methods of working, was the enormous respect which the craftsmen demanded of one another, and indeed of their superiors. Several commentators noticed the Yard workmen's politeness to one another, and to outsiders. 'The artizans were extremely intelligent and obliging', wrote a lady in 1854, 'explaining the whole process as soon as they saw we were really interested'<sup>2</sup>. The qualification - as soon as the men accepted that their genteel visitors were 'really interested' - is important: the questioner was expected to recognise the value of the work before receiving an 'intelligent and obliging' response. Perhaps the most famous example of the dockyardmen's politeness can be found in Marryat's novel, Peter Simple, where the narrator contrasts the workmen's language with that of his seamen:

Close to where the boat landed, they were hauling a large frigate out of what they called the basin; and I was so interested with the sight that, I am sorry to say, I quite forgot all about the boat's crew, and my orders to look after them. What surprised me most was, that although the men employed appeared to be sailors.... Instead of damning and swearing, every body was so polite. 'Oblige me with a pull of the starboard bow hawser, Mr. Jones'. - 'Ease off the larboard hawser,

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<sup>1</sup>One area of investigation was the docking and undocking of vessels. In 1857-8, for instance, the Algiers needed 75 shipwrights and 42 labourers to take her into a tidal dock, while the Arrogant needed 83 labourers but only 56 shipwrights; in the basin dock, the Princess Charlotte required 83 labourers and 62 shipwrights, the Perseverance 48 labourers and 66 shipwrights. The work included hauling the ship, handling the dock gates and caissons, and pumping water from the dock. Ibid, p.28, 567.

<sup>2</sup>Four Days at Portsmouth...., p.7.

Mr. Jenkins, if you please'. - 'Side her over, gentlemen, side her over'. - 'My compliments to Mr. Tompkins, and request that he will cast off the quarter check'. - 'Side her over, gentlemen, side her over, if you please'. - 'In the boat there, pull to Mr. Simmons, and beg he'll do me the favour to check her as she swings. What's the matter, Mr. Johnson?'. - 'Vy, there's one of them ere midshipmites has thrown a red hot tater out of the stern port, and hit our officer in the eye'. - 'Report him to the Commissioner, Mr. Wiggins; and Oblige me by under-running the guess warp. Tell Mr. Simpkins, with my compliments, to coil away upon the jetty. Side her over, side her over, gentlemen, if you please'.

'I asked of a bystander who these people were, and he told me that they were dockyard mateys'.<sup>1</sup>

If the shipwrights (who set the tone and pace of the Yard) and caulkers were relatively immune from the age of machinery, and were even able to absorb metal building without too much difficulty, other wood workers were not so fortunate. The sawyers, customarily regarded as bad-tempered drunkards, had worked in pairs in their pits (one topman holding one end of the saw, and a pitman, showered with sawdust, holding the other), cutting through timber by sheer strength of arm. Steam power entered the Yard in the form of frames carrying more than one blade, capable of sawing lengthways through a tree trunk, and in the form of the circular saw. A saw mill was erected in the early 1840s, involving a not inconsiderable capital (for example, over £4,000 was budgeted for the buildings and machinery in the 1840-41 Estimates<sup>2</sup>). The frames at

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<sup>1</sup>Captain F. Marryatt, Peter Simple, Book 1, ch. viii.

<sup>2</sup>Parl. Papers 1840 xxx, p.318.

first took six blades apiece, and were capable of working through four logs each daily; however, the erection of the steam factory meant that the Yard was able to maintain its machinery, and the frames were extended by the Chief Engineer to take eight to ten logs daily<sup>1</sup>. The Timber Inspector, James Bennett, estimated in 1848 that each frame did the work of four pairs of sawyers; four frames were in operation, equivalent to sixteen pairs of men; in one week the frames saved £37 wages<sup>2</sup>.

The joiners too were subject to changes in the labour process. Machinery in their shop saved £25 a week by 1858, equivalent to the jobs of 22 men; it is possible that the relatively low level of savings on joiners' work represented the high value of what was produced by hand<sup>3</sup>. The joiners had already been brought under tighter supervision, whereas the sawyers' pits had been scattered over the Yard and were difficult to keep an eye on. In 1849 the Master Shipwright, John Fincham, visited a number of private joiners' workshops in the London area, and returned to Portsmouth deeply impressed by what he had seen in Cubitt's shop: it was arranged so that all the workmen were visible to the foreman, the men were kept

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<sup>1</sup>Rep. Committee on Dockyard Economy, p.298.

<sup>2</sup>James Bennett to Committee of Revision, Timber Inspector's Letter Book, 21 Oct. 1848, Dockyard Archives, Portsmouth. Bennett reckoned that 26 sawyers should be sacked: Admiralty in Letters, 21 Oct. 1848 ADM 7/594.

<sup>3</sup>Rep. Cttee on Dockyard Economy, p.570.



regularly supplied with work, and small morticing machines and circular saws saved labour and time. Fincham lost no time in recommending that these marvels should be applied to the joiners' shop at Portsmouth (where there were two shops, exacerbating the problems of supervision; as a result the joiners were moved into one)<sup>1</sup>.

For the joiners and the sawyers, mechanization brought closer supervision over the labour process. The same happened in the smithery; although to a reduced extent since the smiths were already located in one central unit, the enormous capital involved meant that customary ways and times of work came into question, as in the case of the sawyers and joiners. Already the smithery was capital-intensive, and its most important products were probably the enormous anchors (some of which can still be seen lying around the grounds of the National Maritime Museum) that might weigh up to five tons, and were entirely built by hand: the separate parts were forged, then welded together, and fixed to a bolted oaken stock<sup>2</sup>. But in 1839 the Admiralty invested some £4,000 in a steam-powered Hercules and Tilt Hammer for the Portsmouth smithery, and in 1841 to 44 spent nearly £6,000 enlarging the anchor fires and building a crane. At the same time as the steam factory was under construction, the smithery purchased two Nasmyth steam hammers, impressive instruments capable of extremely delicate

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<sup>1</sup>2 Nov. 1848, 27 Jan. 1849, P.R.O. ADM 7/595.

<sup>2</sup>D. Wilson, op.cit., pp. 196-222.

adjustment. Within a short time of the erection of the thirty- and fifty- hundredweight hammers, the smiths had discovered that they could be so finely set as to crack the shell of a nut without damaging the kernel<sup>1</sup>. This was a diverting trick that was shown to visiting dignitaries as diverse as Victor Emanuel of Sardinia, and Pasha Ibrahim of Egypt<sup>2</sup>.

The price paid by the smiths was a greater awareness upon the part of the authorities of the value of their worktime. If work at the smithery stopped for more than a few moments, the furnaces and forges would cool, and reheating was costly; steam hammers would be wasteful if they were under-utilised. There were constant attempts to encroach upon the smiths' meal-times, with implications for industrial relations which will be explored later. According to the shipwright officers in 1839, the loss of time by smiths attending the muster, cleaning themselves and changing their dress, 'is equal to 8 men per Day, independent of the great waste of Fuel.... if the Workmen were to suit their time of refreshment agreeably to the Heat an incalculable saving would be made; and we do not see that any inconvenience would arise from their refreshment being brought into the Yard to them'<sup>3</sup>. A comparison of the use of Nasmyth hammers at the London and North-Western Railway's Crewe works with the Portsmouth smithery dismayed the Admiralty, who promptly informed the Portsmouth authorities

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 18 Apr. 1846.

<sup>2</sup>H.T. 8 Dec. 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Admiralty in letters, 17 June 1839, ADM 1/3440.

of the results, adding

I am to call your attention to the extraordinary results produced by proper care and supervision, in a Private Establishment, which ought not to be better conducted than a large Smithery in one of Her Majesty's Dockyards; & my Lords rely upon your exertions to bring matters to a similar issue.

The Nasmyth hammers were not to be used unless for a full day's work, and once in operation the authorities should use their discretion over dinner hours to keep them in continuous operation<sup>1</sup>. However, the impact of mechanisation upon the smiths was a rather uneven process: an 1839 report showed that (admittedly in a low naval construction period) only 24 were making or repairing anchors, 40 were converting old metal or making smaller metal components such as mast bindings, and 84 were employed about the ships in dock or slipway<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps half of the smiths were not particularly affected by what happened in the smithery.

Technological changes were less ambiguous in their effects upon two more trades. The bakery in the Victualling Yard was revolutionised by Thomas Grant's invention of a flow-process for baking biscuits. Grant, the Storekeeper at the Clarence Yard from 1831 to 1850, invented the mechanism in 1829, receiving £2,000 from the Admiralty who then threw the patent open to public use. During the Irish famine it apparently produced 2,200 tons of biscuit for relief, and was

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Yard: in letters from Admiralty, N.M.M. POR/P/43, 9 Dec. 1848.

<sup>2</sup>P.R.O. ADM 1/3440, 2 May.

able to pump out 10,000 biscuits an hour. The human hand hardly touched the product from beginning to end:

In the first room, the wheat is winnowed and cleaned by ceaselessly revolving cylinders; in another, 30 pairs of mill-stones grind it; and by strings of buckets moved by steam, this meal is carried into an upper room into cylindrical sieves, which rapidly revolving throw the flour outside, while the bran falls into a proper receptacle. This flour undergoes another process, which was not visible, and then passes into a lower room into long narrow wooden troughs eight inches deep, with a succession of revolving fans which continually push the flour into dozens of little steel buckets ever ascending. We then went into a long room swarming with pale-faced bakers. Steam here mixes the dough, rolls it flat, cuts it into squares, stamps it, and when the men have put it into ovens, steam carries back the trays to the other end of the room. 1

This was in 1854, when Grant's process had clearly displaced the old bakers at the centre of the baking process; the Victualling Yard was distinct from the civilian baking industry, which remained characteristically small-scale and concentrated on bread, a far more perishable product than the notorious navy biscuits (which, it was sometimes believed, actually were imperishable).<sup>2</sup> There were more labourers than craftsmen at the Clarence Yard, partly as a result of the general deskilling caused by Grant's mechanization of the baking process (see Table Five), although this is concealed

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<sup>1</sup>Based on Grant's obituary, H.T. 22 Oct. 1859; Four Days at Portsmouth....pp.11-12; Capt. J.T. Merritt RN, Naval Victualling and the Development of the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard, Gosport, until 1870, English Local History Diploma Dissertation, Portsmouth Poly., 1977, p.27.

<sup>2</sup>The industry is described by I. McKay, Trade Unionism in the Baking Industry of Great Britain and Ireland, 1857-74, Warwick M.A. 1976, ch.i.

TABLE FIVE: WORKFORCE AT CLARENCE VICTUALLING YARD, 1820,  
1859 and 1870.

	1820	1859	1870
Craftsmen as % of total*	38.2	39.2	35.8
Total: N=*	157	120	109

(Note: not including salaried staff, crews of Yard craft, warders or police).

Source: Cdr Merritt, op.cit., p.47; Portsmouth Victualling Yard, Times of Entry, 1820, in Portsmouth Dockyard Archives; Rep. by Earl of Camperdown on Victualling Yards, Parl. Papers 1870 xlvi, p.801.

in the figures which omit convicts. The changes had, moreover, wrought a new diversity in the workforce, introducing such trades as the engineer (at 7s a day in 1859 the highest paid craftsman in the Yard), crane operators and stokers<sup>1</sup>. This took place in a workforce that was already highly differentiated, the bakers for example being divided in the eighteenth century into Turners, Mates, Drivers and Idlemen; in the nineteenth into Turners, Doughmakers, Breadweighers and bakers' boys<sup>2</sup>. But while each oven in the eighteenth century had had its own team, each of four men, the steam bakery workers (assisted by boys) were more mobile.

The last example of the way that changes in production methods affected the Government employees is that of the ropemakers. The story here is brief enough: the trade was, so far as Portsmouth is concerned, wiped out by mechanisation. The

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<sup>1</sup>Merritt, op.cit., p.44.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmouth Victualling Office Pay Book 1736-44, Portsmouth Dockyard Archives; Merritt op.cit., p.47.

rope house operated on ancient spinning techniques, carried out by highly skilled males who tarred the hempen yarns, then formed it into ropes on a turning machine (hand-driven); the work was arduous, and the men usually stopped work some hours before the rest of the Yard<sup>1</sup>. The first sign of change came with the opening of a mechanised ropery at Chatham, using jennies that could be operated by women<sup>2</sup>. In 1868 the Admiralty decided to concentrate ropemaking in Plymouth and Chatham, transferring the work to women. The Portsmouth ropehouse closed down in May, only reopening to hold stores; the Chatham women received a wage of 8 to 12s a week - roughly half what would have been paid to a man<sup>3</sup>.

The case of the ropemakers gives some picture of the spectrum of changes in existing techniques and trades. The opening of the steam factory and the transition to metal shipbuilding were changes in the nature of the product, and are therefore of a slightly different order. The steam factory was manned from the outset by 'outsiders', since it involved bringing new skills into the Yard for the purpose of repairing steam engines (most of which were made at Woolwich or by civilian firms under contract) and manufacturing boilers. (The smaller millwrights' shop, opened in 1801, employed many of the same trades such as fitters, turners, smiths, patternmakers and other metal trades, but seems to have confined itself to

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, op.cit., p.203-22.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 25 Mar. 1865.

<sup>3</sup>HT, 20, 23 May 1868.

large numbers of small, often detailed, products such as hinges, screws, bolts, pins, staples, etc.<sup>1</sup>). Within a year of its opening, some 490 men were working in the steam factory. By far the bulk of these were skilled engineering workers, though given the decomposition of engineering skills that is frequently concealed behind the job descriptions, the figures mean less than do, for example, the numbers of shipwrights.

TABLE SIX: DISTRIBUTION OF THE WORKFORCE IN THE STEAM FACTORY,  
PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD, 1850, 1860 and 1869.

	1850	1860	1869
	%	%	%
Draughtsmen & Patternmakers*	6.0	5.3	3.8
Fitters, Erectors, Boilermakers, Engine Smiths, Hammermen, Millwrights*	59.5	59.5	70.2
Labourers, Store Porters*	19.9	22.6	14.9
Total Workforce: N=	487	730	786

Source: Navy Estimates, 1850-51, Parl. Papers 1850 xxxiv, p. 163; Navy Estimates, 1860-61, Parl. Papers 1860 xlii, p.53; Hants Telegraph, 10 Mar. 1869.

\*Unfortunately, these figures include 'Boys' and 'Assistants', but nevertheless give some guide to the proportion of skilled men.

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<sup>1</sup>Rep, C. Dockyard Economy, PP.281, 580.

Although the general level of skill in the steam factory resembles that of the Yard as a whole, the steam factories did start with, and subsequently retained, a distinct identity. For one thing, as the skills required were rare within the Wessex region, many were migrants from London, Scotland and the northern industrial areas. Thus of five engineers whose backgrounds are given in an extract from the entry book, two came from London; both were fitters, and one (James T. Knowles) had served his apprenticeship with Maudsley's. George King, a millwright, was a local man who had served his time with the Ryde Steam Packet Co. Thomas Summers, a stoker, was from Sheerness and had spent ten years in the Royal Navy. Joseph Andrews, thirteen years old, was the son of a leading man of boilermakers from Manchester, employed as a rivet boy (presumably until he was old enough to be indentured)<sup>1</sup>.

These men hardly constitute a statistically significant sample, but they do suggest that the men in the factory came predominantly from outside the dockyard service, and often from outside Portsmouth. This probably marked them off from the bulk of Government employees in the town, certainly if the Victualling Yard workforce of 1820 is anything to go by. Then, some forty seven per cent of all workers came from Portsea Island or Gosport; another forty per cent came from elsewhere in Hampshire or the Isle of Wight; twenty one of the twentyseven bakers were from Portsea Island, while the

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<sup>1</sup>Horne Mss, P.C.R.O. 404A.



coopers tended to be from elsewhere in Hants or even Dorset<sup>1</sup>.

The factory men tended to be marked off from the majority of Yard workers by being immigrants. Their immediate superiors were not men who had risen through the dockyard service, but had come to prominence through the private engineering trade. The Chief Engineer's Assistant, Blake Lambert, had come from Maudslay and Co., while Andrew Murray, the Chief Engineer, was a Scot<sup>2</sup>. The factory men tended to be paid better than the men in the Yard<sup>3</sup>, although their wages were subject to greater fluctuations; as Murray pointed out,

They are paid what we call the market rate, which we learn every now and then by inquiry, and by what is paid by other engineers, such as Messrs. Maudslay or Messrs. Penn 4.

Since the men in the factory were not established, they did not share the general security of employment in the Yard, together with the pension and other benefits that were attached. The factory did not work the same hours as the rest of the Yard (which, except for the smithery and some workshops, was limited by the hours of daylight), but worked a ten-hour day<sup>5</sup>. Had the engineering workers been confined

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<sup>1</sup>These figures are said to be of birthplaces: Victualling Yard Times of Entry, 1 July 1820, Portsmouth Dockyard Archives.

<sup>2</sup>G.J. Crossick, Social Structure and Working Class Behaviour: Kentish London, 1840-1880, London Ph.D 1976, p.109.

<sup>3</sup>R.C. Dockyard Management, p.354.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p.68.

<sup>5</sup>3 Jan. 1849, N.M.M. POR/P/43.

within the walls of their building, they would hardly have been aware that they worked with shipbuilders. But they were sent out of the factory to work on the ships where steam machinery was involved, generally in the steam basin attached to the factory. In 1849, for instance, the Blenheim was docked, and the factory men were ordered to fit pipes to water-cool the shaft bearings, adjust the shaft, replace the cams, alter the funnel-raising apparatus, and increase the velocity of the ventilating fan<sup>1</sup>. These were clearly tasks that were outside the ken of the old wooden shipbuilding workers. The steady extension of steam through the Navy ensured the expansion of the factory - a new smithery, for example, was built at the factory in the 1860s, containing thirty forges, steam-hammers, punching and shearing machines, and a shop for bending and drilling plates<sup>2</sup>.

It is harder to trace the effect of the shift to metal shipbuilding upon the workforce, although much of the impact fell upon the steam factory. The first ironclad to be built at Portsmouth was the Devastation, designed by E.J. Reed (Controller of the Navy) and supervised by the Master Shipwright; it was some 4,400 tons with two gun turrets, and a length of 246 feet<sup>3</sup>. In private yards the replacement of wooden ships by metal thoroughly overturned the labour process,

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<sup>1</sup> 3 Jan. 1849, N.M.M. POR/P/43.

<sup>3</sup> HT 13, 24 Nov. 1869.

<sup>2</sup> HT 28 Aug. 1867.

leading to the introduction of completely new trades and to the eventual decline of the shipwright<sup>1</sup>. In the Royal Yards, however, metal shipbuilding was (after a dispute in 1862 at Chatham) absorbed by the shipwrights<sup>2</sup>. Presumably this peaceful (at Portsmouth, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it has to be assumed) transition is the reason for the absence of documentation about the changeover. In the long run, the change did lead to a certain amount of pressure upon the shipwright, both from skilled metal trades such as the fitters and from labourers who had been trained as drillers or rivetmen. In the short run, however - and only two years of metal building fall within our period at Portsmouth, although repairs had been going on for rather longer - there is little evidence of anything dramatic to report.

So far, this chapter has described the workforce of the Yard and the changes affecting the labour process they were engaged in. However, I want to consider the problem of Yard administration before going on to discuss the economic structure of the town outside the Yard. Sidney Pollard has suggested that managers in private firms during the industrial revolution were able to draw on the experiences of the armed forces, the privileged corporate partnerships, and upon the

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<sup>1</sup>See the account in N. McCord (ed.), Essays in Tyneside Labour History, Newcastle, 1977, by J.F. Clarke.

<sup>2</sup>M. Waters, 'Craft Consciousness in a Government Enterprise: Medway Dockyardmen 1860-1906', Oral History, 5 1977, p.52.

experiences of government departments such as the naval dockyards<sup>1</sup>. Clearly the absence of direct market forces and the political nature of the 'ownership' placed the Yards in a peculiar position compared with other firms; yet, as well as giving us some idea of the ways in which the State perceived its industrial functions, the story of the Yard's management does give some indication of themes that might also be found among other large employers. According to Pollard, the size of firm at which supervision becomes problematic and delegated authority therefore a necessity is around 200 workers in textile mills, and 120-50 in mining and other industries. As we have seen, these figures were reached several times over in the Dockyard, and just about achieved by the Victualling Yard (see Table 5, p.50 above) and the Arsenal (which employed 168 men in 1862)<sup>2</sup>. The problems of management therefore existed simply through the scale of the industries concerned; the absence of the profit motive may even have accentuated them, since it reduced the immediate pressures upon the Yard authorities without lessening those upon the national authorities to economize.

At the head of the Yard's authority structure came the Admiral Superintendent. (Prior to the abolition of the Navy Board, the latter appointed a Resident Commissioner to take charge of the Yard, but the Commissioner - like the Admiral

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<sup>1</sup>Pollard, Genesis of Modern Management, 1968 p.37. But see also p.104: 'The largest units in the shipbuilding industry were the naval dockyards, and these, with their discipline compounded of civil service and armed service practices, and the absence of any direct profit motive, fit badly into our concept of "management"'.

<sup>2</sup>Pollard, op.cit., p.21. The Arsenal figures are from Army Estimates 1862-3, Parl. Papers 1862, xxxii, pp.85, 109.

Superintendent - was a serving Naval Officer, of flag rank). The Admiral Superintendent had a residence inside the Yard, a salary of £1,100 in the 1820s, expenses in the 1860s, together with his naval pay. The selection of the Admiral Superintendent from among serving naval officers might lead to problems; it was not always a popular situation. Admiral Sir Frederick Maitland, for example, appointed Superintendent by Sir James Graham, described the post as 'a description of service I never should have sought'. After two years, he was harassing the Admiralty for permission to attend to 'my private affairs in Scotland' for 'a few weeks'; a year later he privately asked Auckland for patronage:

after having held the situation for three years, during which I have enjoyed none of the advantages which would have attended a command afloat, I trust you will not consider me making an unreasonable request, when I ask as a favor, that you will promote my nephew, Lieut. James Maitland, to the rank of Commander.

Auckland can have done the friendship no good by treating this letter as a piece of official business, and instructing a clerk to reply, on behalf of the Board, refusing Maitland's request for patronage<sup>1</sup>. Admiral Sir Astley Cooper Key was so harried by the Master Shipwright and the Chief Constructor that, although an ambitious man, he was glad to escape to the relative backwater of Malta Dockyard<sup>2</sup>. The Victualling Yard also had a naval officer in charge, this time a Captain;

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<sup>1</sup> Admiralty In-Letters P.R.O. ADM 1/3436, 2 Aug. 1835; Portsmouth Yard: Commissioner's Letter Book, N.M.M. POR/M/1B, 8 Aug. 1834.

<sup>2</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, op.cit., p.23; Admiral Key had been Superintendent for just one year; H.T. 25 May 1870. In his letters on the Navy in the late 'forties, Napier had remarked that the Superintendents were greatly overworked: H.N. Williams (ed), The Life and Letters of Admiral Sir Charles Napier, KCB, 1917, p.231.

however, the Victualling Yards were placed under their civilian storekeepers in 1871; as the Earl of Camperdown wrote in his Report on the Victualling Yards, 'A Storekeeper is manifestly the responsible if not the chief officer'<sup>1</sup>. The Dockyards, however, continue to be commanded by a naval officer today.

Below the Commissioner at the start of the century came the six Principal Officers, all theoretically of equal status. In practice, the Master Shipwright's powers were so extensive that he controlled the bulk of activity within the Yard; all matters concerning the actual repair, construction, demolition, or decommissioning of ships came within his competence. Secondly, there was the Master Attendant - theoretically perhaps slightly superior to the Master Shipwright, since the Master Attendant took overall responsibility for the Yard while the Superintendent was absent; appointed from among the Masters in the Navy, his duties were limited to ships afloat, the sailmakers' loft, and the rigging house. Third came the Clerk of the Yard, who acted as the Commissioner's secretary. Fourthly, the Clerk of the Cheque was (approximately) a sort of treasurer-cum-accountant. Fifthly, the Clerk of the Survey was responsible for receiving stores into the Yard, and the Storekeeper (sixth) was responsible for issuing them. In practice, some of the lines of duty were not so clearcut as my summary suggests, and the position of the Master Shipwright

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<sup>1</sup>Parl. Papers 1870, xlvi p.799; Merritt, p.30.

as a 'first among equals' was unquestioned.

Below the Principal Officers came the 'Master Workmen'.

There were two Assistants to the Master Shipwright (one of whom, the Timber Master, oversaw the supplies of wood from purchase to shipside), Master Boatbuilder, Master Mastmaker, the Mechanist and Engineer, the Foremen of the Yard, of New Work, and Foreman Afloat, and the Masters of the minor trades (joiners, smiths, bricklayers, etc.). These all came under the Master Shipwright. The Master Rigger and Master Sailmaker both came under the Master Attendant, as did the Boatswain of the Yard (who took charge of the Yard labourers). The Ropehouse was considered a quasi-independent entity, with its own hierarchy of authority. Beneath the 'Master Workmen' came a stratum of 'Inferior Officers', but before these are discussed, it is probably best to deal briefly with the more senior authorities.

The first point is that this hierarchy did change considerably through the period under study. A number of the Principal grades were abolished, leaving only the Master Shipwright, the Storekeeper and the Master Attendant untouched by the 1870s (although the Master Shipwright's title was altered, in 1875, to Chief Constructor). The post of Clerk of the Cheque was abolished in April 1830; part of his duties went to a new Treasury Department (handling financial transactions within the Yard), while the Master Attendant and Captain of the Ordinary shared others<sup>1</sup>. This, one of the last efforts

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 5 Apr. 1830.

of the Tory administration at economical reform, was left to stand by Graham on assuming office, and in 1831 it was decided to abolish the posts of Second Assistant Master Shipwright, Mechanist and Engineer, and several minor trades' officers - the Masters of Painters, Metal Mills, Millwrights, and the Foreman of Masons<sup>1</sup>. In 1843 the Master House Carpenter's post was abolished, although as his work was to be done by a Director of Works and the first Director was the ex-master House Carpenter, this may have been something of a formality<sup>2</sup>. The increasing amount of engineering led to the appointment of a Chief Engineer (Robert Taplin, previously the Mechanist) in 1844, with autonomous responsibility for the steam factory (subject, of course, to the Admiralty through the Superintendent).<sup>3</sup> This led to a prolonged period of conflict and tension between the Master Shipwright's department and the factory administration, which ended only with the abolition of the post of Chief Engineer; for six years the Master Shipwright added 'and Engineer' to his title (the last Chief Engineer, the Scot Andrew Murray, was made Engineer-in-Chief of the Navy). After 1862, an Accountant was appointed.

The end result of the administrative changes was to make the Yard's main business - building and repairing ships - the domain of the Master Shipwright; but this was not the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 28 Feb. 1831.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 21 Aug. 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. 5 Feb. 1844.



automatic outcome of any Admiralty desires to clarify patterns of administration. By the 1850s, there was at least one other contender for the post of senior civilian officer - the Chief Engineer. The Committee on Dockyard Economy that met in 1859, in the aftermath of the Crimea, included two Engineer Officers, one Rear Admiral, and only one Master Shipwright (who refused to accept the majority Report). The Committee recommended that the workshops which used machinery should be taken from the Master Shipwright and placed under the Engineer; although the First Lord (Somerset) rejected this line of reasoning, as he did others which were based primarily upon the appeal to the model of private enterprise, the evidence taken before the Committee indicated that the idea may not have been a concoction of the Engineers'.

The complex of motives that underlay the Admiralty's views about the Yards (and it has to be repeated that Admiralties were political creatures) may be better analysed through the changes among the 'inferior officers'. These were legion, commencing with the abolition of the post of Quartermaster in 1822, and cannot all be described in detail. The main themes that emerge are first the Admiralty's continuous concern with economy, and second the need to balance that concern with the requirements of supervision. In turn, this issue was therefore about the most fundamental question, control of the pace and quality of the work performed, and thus became tied in with questions like piece work vs. day work, experienced managers vs. respected outsiders, and so on. It is perhaps

best to keep these matters separate at the moment, while remembering that they were in fact very closely connected with one another.

The connecting link was the fundamental question: the need for economy. Given the limited scope of the nineteenth century state, the naval and military budgets of an imperial power could seem enormous: apart from debt charges, what we have come to call 'defence expenditure' was the largest item in the budget throughout the century, amounting to over one-third of all government expenditure in 1860, for example<sup>1</sup>. In an age when radicals spearheaded the widespread demand for cheap government, the Navy in general, and dockyards in particular, could hardly hope to keep out of the public gaze. One index of this was the decision by Graham to publish detailed, accurate and comprehensible Estimates. Hume denounced the flummery of the Dockyard Brigades (an early version of the Volunteer Movement) as 'spoiling good carpenters and making bad soldiers', but above all as costing £10,000<sup>2</sup>. The mover of an unsuccessful demand for a Select Committee on the Yards in 1848 complained that

there had been a great want of economy in the expenditure...; and that if the system which had been pursued in the naval dockyards had been adopted in the yard of any private shipbuilder, it would have been attended with absolute ruin 3.

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<sup>1</sup>W. Ashforth, 'Economic Aspects of Late Victorian Naval Architecture', Econ. Hist. Rev., 1965 p.491.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, 8 Apr. 1850.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 9 May 1848.

Cobden attacked the sum spent on steam basins; 'there was no annual stocktaking, no balance-sheet, no individual capitalists to be ruined.... There was not an individual connected with the Admiralty, from the First Lord down to the humblest labourer or shipwright, who did not become a political instrument in the hands of somebody or other'<sup>1</sup>.

Barry, whose books have already been noted, became the publicist of the economisers and radicals outside Parliament. But the view that the problems of the dockyards arose from the absence of the profit motive was to be found within both the Admiralty and the Yard administrations. Moreover, under some First Lords (Graham was one; Sir Francis Baring, one of Portsmouth's M.P.s, was another) the perceived absence was linked to a demand for closer supervision, further division of labour, and - more under Baring than Graham - greater mechanization. Another reform closely associated with both Baring and Graham was the persistent attempt to reduce the amount of political patronage that undoubtedly was involved in promotions within the dockyards.

Questions of promotion and supervision were, of course, closely connected. In the words of the Committee on Dockyard Economy:

Great capitalists, who desire to enter into a large manufacturing concern requiring skill and experience for its success, but of the details of which they are themselves ignorant, do not take upon themselves the responsibility of controlling

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, 9 Aug. 1848, 10 Mar. 1851.

the mode of carrying on the work, or of engaging the subordinate foremen, or leading men, or the individual workmen. They leave these matters in the hands of a manager.... The Committee are of opinion, that in the Dockyard and Factory Services, the line between the employers and the employed has hitherto been very indistinctly drawn, and that there has been a tendency to class the chief professional officers amongst the employed <sup>1</sup>.

The Committee recommended a small class of 'superior' apprentices, who would form a cadre of educated but experienced men from whom senior Yard officers could be appointed; that promotions be considered as probationary for the first six months; and that promoted men should not serve in a Yard in which they had worked at their tools<sup>2</sup>.

Such matters of status were felt rather more keenly by the 'fifties than they had been earlier in the century. The distinction between profession and craft, when both served apprenticeships, was still fluid enough in the 1850s for the engineers in the steam factory to refer to the naval Engineers (who had officer status) as 'The sea-going portion of our profession', and to demand recognition of this status<sup>3</sup>. In 1813, the applicants for the superior class of apprenticeships included the son of the Rector of Woodstock, and several

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<sup>1</sup>Report, p.5.

<sup>2</sup>This last was inserted 1) to get rid of family 'clans'; 2) to reduce the amount of favouritism; 3) to end familiarity between employee and manager. Ibid., pp.114-15.

<sup>3</sup>Petition in Ibid., p.583.

sons of local tradesmen<sup>1</sup>. The Principal Yard Officers were permitted to join the Army and Navy Officers Reading Room and the Naval Officers' Library<sup>2</sup>. Even within the Yard, as has been shown, craftsmen and officers treated each other with respect; when a Principal Officer called a Quarterman 'Joseph Allen' during the pay muster in June 1813, an aggrieved cabin-keeper noted in his diary that 'they are Calld. "Mr." in General'<sup>3</sup>.

The main 'incentive' to force up the craftsmen's pace of work was a system of piece-work. It dated back to the 1770s, when its introduction met with a storm of protest from the men, and by the Wars was well-established<sup>4</sup>. A scheme of prices for the Task and Job system (as piece work was described) was laid down in 1811, and remained in use until 1833 (although reduced unilaterally by 20% in 1822); post-war wage cuts were carried out by shortening hours rather than cutting the piece rates. Graham ended piecework, primarily as an economy measure, and placed the Yards on day pay. In 1847, however,

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<sup>1</sup>Qualifications of Candidates, 8 Nov. 1813, in Officers' Report Book, N.M.M. POR/D/30.

<sup>2</sup>H.T. 29 Nov. 1819, 13 Sept. 1830.

<sup>3</sup>Entry for 11 June 1813, in Field (ed. & Intro.), 'The Diary of a Dockyard Worker', Portsmouth Archives Review, iii, 1978.

<sup>4</sup>See R.J.B. Knight, 'Labour Relations in the Royal Dockyards in the Eighteenth Century', unpublished paper read at Inst. of Hist. Research, 6 Feb. 1975; and J.M. Haas's account, 'The Introduction of Task Work into the Royal Dockyards, 1775', Journal of British Studies, viii, 1969, pp. 44-68.

with Auckland at the Admiralty, it was claimed that 'the quantity of work done in the dockyards is below the standard of well-conducted private establishments'<sup>1</sup>. The answer was seen as the revival of a limited system of Task and Job work: however, possible total earnings were to be limited, so that while men could be docked pay if their work fell below a specified quantity, they could not earn more if their work rose above that level. The problem was that, as only a small part of the Yard's work could be measured at any given time, the scheme's success depended upon the supervisor's willingness to risk unpopularity by reporting instances of low productivity so that they could be measured. However, at the same time the supervisory grades closest to the shipwrights - the leading men in charge of the gangs - were themselves wage-workers, dependent upon the gang's performance for their own earnings. There was thus not only the gang's feelings to consider; but the leading man's own pockets tended to encourage him to ignore the Measurer and his staff. Finally, during the Crimean War, part of the workforce was replaced upon Task and Job, with unlimited earnings<sup>2</sup>.

The point of Task and Job with limited earnings was obvious enough. John Fincham (Master Shipwright, 1844-1852) reported in 1848 that the scheme

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<sup>1</sup>Cit. in Rep. C. Dockyard Economy, from an Admiralty Order of Feb. 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Admiralty to Surveyor of Navy, 21, 26 Jan., 1 Feb., 1854, P.R.O. ADM 89/1.

is working beneficially to the service; by ensuring that the quantity of work performed will always be something more than an equivalent to the wages paid. The evidence of its advantages are clear by the quantity of work now performed by the shipwrights, over what was formerly done; and which is more conspicuous in the minor trades, as the joiners, smiths, sawyers, &c. 1

In the mast house, the men had been mulcted of £2 16s when the system was introduced; now their work was valued by the Measurer's staff at £4 10s above the wages paid out on limited earnings: 'the fear of coming short, becomes a constant stimulus to exertion...and the uncertainty when the measurements will take place, keeps up a constant exertion'. The exception of the shipwrights from Fincham's general enthusiasm is suggestive: since they were not engaged on repetitive detail tasks, the measurers found their work hard to deal with; the shipwrights were likely to 'ca canny'. Hence the introduction of piece work with unlimited earnings during the Crimean War, 'in order to expedite the various services, & at the same time to afford the men in the Yards an increased rate of wages, during the present high price of every description of food'<sup>2</sup>. The problem was, complained the Committee on Dockyard Economy in 1859, that the men still practiced 'ca canny': although they did more work than on day pay, they

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<sup>1</sup>Report of Oct. 1848, P.R.O. ADM 7/594.

<sup>2</sup>26 Jan. 1854, P.R.O. ADM 89/1.

limited it so that their earnings were not so high as to call the list of prices into question. Even more suspiciously, they earned almost as much during the winters as during the summer, although the working day was several hours shorter during the early nights<sup>1</sup>.

The answer proposed by the Committee was to combine day work with closer supervision over the labour process. In recommending that leading men should possess more powers of punishment and that Principal Officers should be more 'professional' the Committee drew on a number of examples, and not simply that of 'Great capitalists'. There were the armed forces:

this supposed line between the employers of labour and the employed, should be more distinctly drawn than hitherto, in the same manner as a line is drawn in the Navy and in the Army between commissioned and non-commissioned officers.... It is as necessary to keep up a proper system of discipline in the one case as in the other, and as the men in the dockyards are not under the pennant, it becomes the more necessary to strengthen the position of the officers, and obtain for them as much moral respect as possible, as it is only by that, and by an acknowledged superiority on their part, that the men can be ruled over by them 2.

Another example was the steam factory: here the men were on day pay, but with controlled supervision accompanied by frequent petty punishments. In the factory, said its Chief Foreman, there is

a difference of system [from the shipwrights' department], implying a greater amount of control and subordination....In the factory, the habit is, slight and

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<sup>1</sup>Report, pp. 23-4, 147-8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.5-6.



comparatively minor faults are checked immediately by small fines; and by being brought before the superior officer, to be reprimanded, and with the power of immediate dismissal. In the dockyard department the subordinate officers do very frequently, and in fact generally, look over these minor offences <sup>1</sup>.

The third example, more surprisingly, was the public school image as presented by Thomas Arnold of Rugby: 'The views which [the Committee] entertain respecting the management of large bodies of men may be illustrated by a reference to the principles of trust and confidence laid down by Dr. Arnold in his government of those under him'<sup>2</sup>.

Although there were those within the Yard hierarchy who favoured adoption of the methods practiced by 'Great capitalists', their perception of the 'capitalist' was mediated through local, professional, and traditional naval/military ideas. Moreover, such ideas only filtered through into administrative practice in a very partial manner. The Yards generally remained under the control of the Master Shipwrights, and of the quasi-aristocratic senior naval officers and politicians who sat at the Admiralty or in the Superintendent offices. 'After eighteen months' experience in his dockyard, I have no

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, pp.80-1, 294.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.27. The question of whether Dr. Arnold can be seen as an instance of 'the entrepreneurial ideal' has been the subject of some consideration: H.J. Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880, 1972, p.298; S. Pollard, 'Class and Idealism', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, xix 1969, p.30. Arnold's ideas did take root among some Anglican observers of industrial life: see, eg., W.G. Blackie, D.D., Heads and Hands in the World of Labour, 1865, pp. 12, 71, 75-6. Disraeli's favoured 'models' for dockyard reform were (1) Laird's Birkenhead shipyard, which the M.P. had told him of personally; and (2) other civil service departments: R. Blake, op.cit., p.454.

hesitation in saying that the working of the present system strikes me as remarkably good', wrote the Hon. George Grey (Superintendent at Portsmouth) after he had read the Report of the Dockyard Economy Committee. The Master Shipwright, Richard Abethell, complained that 'a majority of the Committee have been actuated by a strong bias in favour of the factory system, and the mode of conducting business in private establishments'. Somerset, the First Lord, expressed his own disapproval:

It is an obvious truth that the officers of a public establishment are not stimulated by motives of private gain to enforce the full amount of work which the men may be capable of performing. This is a defect inseparable from public establishments, but, on the other hand, where work of excellent quality is required, the incentive of private gain is often found to impair the honest performance of the work <sup>1</sup>.

The Dockyards were cushioned from some of the harsher sides of nineteenth century industrial management by the mixture of quasi-aristocratic leadership at the very top, and by the specialised nature of the product at the bottom, both of which tended to value achievement and craftsmanship over speed and economy.

This makes those changes that did take place in the recruitment and promotion of management rather difficult to assess. For

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<sup>1</sup>The quotes are from the Observations on the Rep. C. on Dockyard Economy, Parl. Papers 1860 xlii, pp.287, 288, 385.

much of the period, there were skilled men available who had been trained in the Dockyard schools, and from the late 1840s all candidates for promotion were examined. This suggests that there was, as in other branches of the state, a persistent tendency to put emphasis upon formal knowledge as a criterion of competence. (The closure of the school between 1832 and 1842 was partly due to Graham's desire to economize, partly due to its Professor's partizan support for iron and steam over wood and sail). The shipwright officers of the Yard, as well as most of the officers of the other trades, were always men who had served at their tools, even if (as in the case of some of the products of the superior classes of apprentices) that service was somewhat perfunctory. By the 1860s the Master Shipwrights as a group were developing an awareness of their professional status as naval architects: the 18 founding members of the Institute of Naval Architects included three Master Shipwrights and four of their Assistants<sup>1</sup>.

Portsmouth Dockyard was unusual in the world of Victorian capitalism for a number of reasons. First, its size made its management highly problematic and its operation an extremely

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<sup>1</sup>D.R. Jack, A History of the Royal Dockyard Schools, with particular Reference to the Portsmouth School, London M.A., 1969; E.J. Reed, 'Introduction', Trans. Inst. of Naval Architects i, 1860, p.xv. The connection between state bureaucratization and the specialized professionals is discussed in T.J. Johnson, Professions and Power, 1972, pp. 46-7, 77-82.

costly business. It brought together large numbers of skilled workers; the jobs of most of these, like the shipwrights and caulkers, were specialised and subject to control by the gang and the worker, and this in turn entailed some personal experience of the immediate labour process on the part of management. Yet the recruitment of management from the shop floor, however mediated by schools, exams, and postings to different yards, was itself a somewhat questionable matter to some critics. Second, the fact that the Yard was government-owned marked it off from most Victorian industry. It was subject to the trade cycle, the rate of exploitation, and the need to produce at the market rate - which prevailed elsewhere - but only in the most indirect of ways. If not outside capitalist production entirely, it was neither of it, nor was it parallel to it, for the political and naval leaderships never expected it to be a purely capitalist concern, run on capitalist lines. The third unusual feature was that, in conditions of parliamentary democracy, the Yard's management was open to public debate. M.P.s could call for reductions in the costs of running the Yards, or they could call for higher wages for the Yard workers; they could call for an investigation into the Yards by either Select Committee or Royal Commission, or they could call for confidential Admiralty letters or reports to be published. If the Yard was not exactly unique - there were, after all, Government

industries of comparable size in Plymouth and South London<sup>1</sup>  
- it was nevertheless not what most Victorians thought of when  
the word 'industry' came into their heads. Nor was it much  
like the mass of civilian industry and commerce of Portsmouth  
itself, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>The Yards and Arsenal at Woolwich, Deptford and Greenwich  
are the subject of Crossick, op.cit.; Chatham features  
briefly in J.M. Preston, Industrial Medway: an historical  
survey, Rochester 1977, pp. 17-25. So far as I know there  
is no study of Plymouth (Devonport) Yard. M. Agulhon  
has examined a French arsenal town in his study, Une  
Ville Ouvrière au temps du socialisme utopique; Toulon  
1815 à 1851 Paris, 1970.

### CHAPTER THREE: LIFE AND LABOUR OUTSIDE THE DOCKYARD GATES

Without wishing to deny the importance of large-scale capitalist industry in nineteenth century Britain, it should be remembered that older and smaller units of production continued to permeate most local economies<sup>1</sup>. This was true not only for commercial or administrative centres, of which the capital was the outstanding example, but also for many manufacturing towns, where the spread of newer techniques and methods of organization often brought in their wake new opportunities for small-scale production<sup>2</sup>. What might, without too much violence, be called petty commodity production was frequently linked to large capital in a relation of dependence (perhaps operating as a supplier in the interstices of large capital, or perhaps depending upon merchants to supply operating capital). From the point of view of those

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<sup>1</sup>The best discussion of this is in G. Stedman Jones, Outcast London, 1971; rather to my surprise, I also found food for thought in V.I. Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia, Collected Works vol.3, Moscow 1972, esp. pp. 435-41. I owe this reference to Dr. R. Gray; Cf. R. Samuel 'The Workshop of the World; Steam Power and Hand Technology in Mid-Victorian Britain', History Workshop Journal iii, 1977, pp. 6-72.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gatrell, op.cit. The case of Birmingham is well-known (e.g. A. Briggs, Victorian Cities, 1968, ch.V), and is being subjected to intensive examination by C. Behagg of Birmingham University. Sheffield is treated in S. Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield, Liverpool 1959, chs. 2 and 3.

working in it though, the experience was one of small units, possibly even the home itself, often accompanied by the deep poverty which caused and in turn intensified 'sweating'.

Portsmouth possessed such a sector; it also possessed a large retail sector; and there was a significant amount of mercantile activity, centred upon the civilian port.

Portsmouth's economy, it has already been shown, was not a particularly diverse one. Most adult males, if not in the dockyard, worked in transport or building. Most women stayed at home, including many of those employed in clothing, and many others went into domestic service. Taken together with general labour, these occupations account for well over half of the occupied population (see above, pp.14 and 16 ). But if the economy was not particularly diverse in terms of the range of occupations open to local people, it was diverse in terms of the size of firms. Consider clothing: here, all the main sectors - shoemaking, tailoring, staymaking, dressmaking, sewing - were well represented in the town's economy. Staymaking, the most prominent local industry, employed between twelve and fifteen times as many people in Portsmouth as (proportionately) it did elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. Even shoemaking was a fairly important employer until it collapsed under competition in the late sixties and the seventies. Yet, taking as an index of the number of employers (many employers, of course,

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<sup>1</sup>Riley, op.cit., p.12.

were not listed in the Directory), it is clear that small-scale production was the norm. (See Table One). There are

TABLE ONE: ESTIMATED SIZE OF INDUSTRIAL UNITS IN VARIOUS  
TRADES, 1851.

	No. employed			No. of employers	Approx.
	(1)Male	(2)Female	(3)Total	(estimate)	Average Unit size
Staymaking	0	535	535	6	32
Tailoring	439	119	558	63	9
Shoemaking	788	434	1,222	110	11
Millinery	0	1,322	1,322	34	39
Baking	353	11	364	57	6

Sources: 1851 Census; 1852 Post Office Directory, Hants.

a number of objections to this Table, of course: above all, it omits many small masters and mistresses in such trades, to say nothing of independent self-employed craftsmen. It is possible that some of the larger employers were merchant out-putters from London. Nevertheless, the Table does show that in most of the male-dominated clothing trades, small scale activities were the norm.

The reasons for this are not hard to find: the male clothing trades were concerned to meet a large local market for cheap goods, which included hordes of servicemen. 'High class' work was unusual, and little time was spent acquiring the



necessary skill (which was anyway taught to generations of workhouse children). John Pounds, the 'father' of the ragged school movement, took up shoe repairing after he was crippled in an accident at the Yard; previously, he had been a shipwright<sup>1</sup>. The amount of capital required to become a 'casual' or semi-skilled shoemaker varied. Robert Stemming, a clarinetist in the Navy, set himself up in 1841 as a boot and shoemaker with a capital of £300; rather uncautiously, he trusted too many Navy officers with credit, and went bankrupt after eighteen years in the trade<sup>2</sup>. Stemming seems to have produced for the upper end of the men's market; but William Hoskins of Blackfriars Road, Southsea, had started with a capital of £12; William Hazel had started in 1849 with £10; both went bankrupt in 1864<sup>3</sup>. A Poor Law Guardian said in the same year that 'the trade had...declined wonderfully here, for what cause he did not know'<sup>4</sup>. Presumably the cause was the intrusion of machine-made boots or shoes from such centres as Northampton; certainly, from this time shoemaking declined signally. There had been a shift to a form of 'putting out' in the 'forties'<sup>5</sup>; during the 1860s there was a slight tendency for the local branch of the trade to go into the factory.

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<sup>1</sup>See H. Hawkes, Recollections of John Pounds, 1884, passim; a similar case, where a labourer in the Yard became a shoemaker, is in HT, 2 June 1832.

<sup>2</sup>Stemming's bankruptcy is reported in HT, 12 Feb. 1859. I do not know whether these figures refer to fixed capital alone, or to fixed and liquid capital.

<sup>3</sup>HT, 9 Jan. 1864.

<sup>4</sup>For Northamp<sup>ton</sup>shire shoemaking see R.A. Church 'Labour supply and innovation 1800-1860: The Boot and Shoe Industry', Business History, xii, 1970.

<sup>5</sup>Moreton and Sons of St. Mary St. advertised in 1849 for '30 men, who have been used to strong work' (HT, 6 Jan.).

Bishops of Southampton, for instance, set up a factory and retail shop in Commercial Road, Landport, in 1860<sup>1</sup>. By now, local shoemaking as a whole was facing a long-term structural decline rather than the cyclical and seasonal depressions that had caused such misery in the thirties and forties<sup>2</sup>.

A few clothing workshops in 1851 employed larger numbers of workers. Only one shoemaker employed over twenty men according to the census enumerators' schedules, but three tailoring masters were reported to employ over twenty. (See Table Two).

TABLE TWO: SIZE OF CLOTHING EMPLOYERS (SHOES, TAILORS)  
ACCORDING TO 1851 CENSUS

	1-9 workers	10-19 workers	20+ workers
Tailors			
Number of masters	15	2	3
Total employed	61	23	128
Shoemakers			
Number of masters	19	2	1
Total employed	100	24	50

Source: 1851 Census, enumerators' schedule books.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Port of Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce Journal, x, Oct. 1957, p.29.

<sup>2</sup>E.g. P.R.O. MH 12/10916, letter of 6 Feb. 1838; and 8 July 1844, MH 12/10918.

<sup>3</sup>It is not claimed that these figures are accurate, but that they constitute an index which may act as a guide to changes over time.

The custom of naval and military officers was probably important here, since the quality of the work may have combined with the need for substantial capital (since officers tended to live on credit) to make economies of scale, and specialized supervision, worth while. The firm of Galt and Gieve, for instance, hired a large yacht during the Crimean Wars, which set sail for Sebastopol laden with tailors and uniforms<sup>1</sup>. Galt had initially gone into business on his own, buying up the shop of the twice-bankrupted Augustus Urmston Meredith (father of George, the writer). Galt's business drew upon the custom of army officers in particular; in 1851, for instance, he was selling the 'Fitzclarence Dress Cape', lined with alpaca and named after the illegitimate Lieutenant Governor of the town<sup>2</sup>. Still, if a few masters like Galt or his partner from 1852, James Gieve, dominated the tailoring world, smaller firms could sell slops, or even win naval contracts, to survive. Perhaps by the late sixties, there were also a fair number of women in the workshops. Charles Hawkins, an outfitter of Queen Street, can be taken as one example: once a journeyman, he had started out in business as a naval contractor, working his female machinists from eight in the morning till eight at night<sup>3</sup>. The scale of the larger

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<sup>1</sup>Riley, op.cit., p.13.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 12 Jan. 1851.

<sup>3</sup>HT, 16 Mar. 1870; Post Office Directory for Hampshire, 1874.

workshops involved the employment of supervisors: James Lancaster, of Half Moon Street, had been a foreman for eighteen years before he took over the business when his master died<sup>1</sup>. Nor did tailoring come under challenge as shoemaking had done; it may have continued to be a small-scale industry, employing more women as sewing-machines were adopted, but because of the constant demand for officers' uniforms, there was a reasonable demand for locally-produced bespoke goods.

It was in female employment, however, that Portsmouth's clothing industries were most remarkable. A few women worked in factories: the wholesale boot and shoe factory of Thomas Ross (a Councillor, with Chartist sympathies) employed 28 women alongside 22 men. Most women wage earners worked at various forms of sewing: staymaking, millinery, dressmaking, and shirt-making. Evidently the predominance of such occupations was a product of Portsmouth's idiosyncratic labour market; the Yard, arsenal, army and navy all employed exclusively male labour. The daughters and wives of working men could not, as in many textile areas, be employed alongside their husbands or fathers; Indeed, the wives and daughters of soldiers or seamen hardly ever saw their husbands. An absent man is often an unreliable man, and servicemen were particularly prone to guzzle or squander their resources rather than hand them to their families. (Hence the ferocity of many Portsmouth

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 21 Aug. 1852.

women, according to Captain Marryatt at least). Need drove them towards sewing as a source of income. London played an important part in stimulating Portsmouth's clothing industries. Queen Street possessed an outlet for at least one fashionable London drapery in 1800<sup>1</sup>, while local drapers and milliners contrived to visit the capital to discover the season's fashions<sup>2</sup>. By the 1840s competition from Portsmouth was in turn seriously depressing the level of wages in London:

What reduces the price of plain shirt-making in the metropolis so much below that of other needle-work, is the circumstance of the London workers having to encounter so much competition from females employed in the same branch of the trade in the country. Immense numbers of shirts are made in Portsea, Portsmouth, and several other towns, for the London market. If the reader was surprised, when informed that shirts are made at the rate of four shillings and sixpence in town [per dozen], how great must be his astonishment, when I pledge myself for the truth of the statement, that in the places just mentioned, shirts are, in some cases, actually made as low as half-a-crown per dozen, or twopence half-penny each! 3

In staymaking, a Londoner told Mayhew that 'They are mostly stitched at Portsmouth now. They can get it done cheaper there than what they can here, owing to the sailors' wives round about there, I suppose'<sup>4</sup>. Many Portsmouth stay-stitchers,

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 8 Dec. 1800; I owe this reference to Mrs. P. Sharpe.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 15 May, 6, 13, 20 Nov. These sources would suggest a seasonal pattern of employment in the fashionable end of the sewing trades.

<sup>3</sup>James Grant, Lights and Shadows of London Life, 1844, p.202.

<sup>4</sup>Morning Chronicle, 16 Nov. 1849.

according to James Grant, were employed by agents of 'the London houses'<sup>1</sup>.

Presumably the rhythm of such work followed the notorious seasonality that affected the London clothing markets<sup>2</sup>: the Child Employment Commission heard that 'there are two seasons, spring and autumn', in Portsmouth<sup>3</sup>. Sub-contracting and putting-out helped to produce what was known as 'sweating'. Few of the firms used sewing machines on the premises. Seagrove's, of the Hard, did employ machines, and had some twenty or so women working on the premises as a result; however, work was finished off in the home. Mrs. Joseph, a wholesale shirtmaker who claimed to run the largest firm in the area, employed only one or two people on the premises; the rest of the workers took the shirts home:

One stitches, another puts together,  
and a third puts the buttons on and makes  
the holes; so they come into our hands and  
go out again, several times before they  
are finished<sup>4</sup>.

Davies' of Landport employed 24 people on the premises, and a further forty out-workers; some of the outworkers were themselves employers of labour (two of whom actually employed more than ten women).

Staymaking was the most likely to take place in a factory, the employer providing capital equipment. This can be seen

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit., p.204.

<sup>2</sup>V. Stedman Jones, op.cit., ch.2.

<sup>3</sup>Report, in Parl. Papers 1864, xxii, p.140.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

in the life of Thomas Jackson, who although born in Portsea worked in a London counting house until he was about twenty-five, when he set up in business in Portsea as a draper. In 1819 Jackson advertized that 'in consequence of the great increase of his STAY TRADE, which engages the whole of his time, it is his intention to decline the Drapery Business'<sup>1</sup>. After fifteen years in business, Jackson retired to the rural peace of Kingston where he died in 1857, leaving a personal estate of £30,000, and a house and lands worth over £2,300<sup>2</sup>. The bulk of work required was line-stitching, which lent itself to simple mechanization far more easily than, say, button-holing did. Helby's of Portsea employed 55 to 60 women on sewing-machines and 10 or so finishers in the factory; 200 finishers worked in their own homes. Only one of Helby's indoor workers was as old as thirty, while the younger started at thirteen. At Chilcot and Williams' Landport factory the process of factorization was probably more advanced; by 1871 they were being assessed for profits of £1,000 per annum under the Income Tax<sup>3</sup>.

Staymaking was unusual in its concentration - both in the town and in the handful of highly-profitable firms. By 1911, one-fifth of Britain's staymakers worked in Portsmouth - a higher degree of concentration than the association of Northampton with shoemaking<sup>4</sup>. This prosperous trade rested upon the

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 11 Oct. 1819. It is not likely that Jackson left drapery entirely, but rather continued the two businesses side by side. See Jackson's evidence before the H. of C. Sel. Committee on the Camber (Portsmouth) Quay Bill, 7 May 1839, H.C.C. Minutes 1839, vol.5, H.L.R.O.; and HT 10 July 1820.

<sup>2</sup>Personal wealth and its estimation are described in ch.4 below. The 1850 rate book says that Jackson's house and land was worth £69 15s per annum.

<sup>3</sup>Chilcot & Williams Mss., PCRO 504 A; Riley, op.cit., p.16.

<sup>4</sup>R. Jackson, 'The development of manufacturing in Portsmouth', in Bradbeer (ed.). op.cit., p.28.

deepest misery in the female labour market. This is a substantial point, and not just a 'forgotten dimension': had it not been for the female labour market, Portsmouth's corset industry would never have developed; businessmen could never have advertized for as many as a thousand shirt-stitchers, and found hands from not only Portsmouth but also Havant, Emsworth and Fareham<sup>1</sup>; Thomas Jackson could not have accumulated his £30,000 and become a magistrate, without women like Mary Ann McEvoy, a mother of three who sang at the music hall in the evenings and 'went out to needlework in the day'<sup>2</sup>.

Our discussion of the clothing trades confirms historians' descriptions of nineteenth century industry in terms of its diversity. The same could be said of the food and drink industries, which varied from the steam power of James Smith's Steam Biscuit factory with thirteen men and two women workers, or Lush's steam-powered Southsea brewery, to the struggles of men like James Richard Cox, who served an apprenticeship with a Havant grocer and confectioner and eventually opened his own bakers' shop in Southsea (a somewhat precarious affair, if Cox's diary is to be believed)<sup>3</sup>. Given the small amount of capital required to set up a small bread bakery or a backyard brewery, and given the regular demand for the perishable

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<sup>1</sup>There is a revealing discussion of shirtmakers' wages in HT, 14 and 21 Jan. 1839; adverts for workers are in, e.g., HT 24 Mar. 1830 and 7 Oct. 1848; Portsmouth, Portsea & Gosport Free Register, Feb. 1841.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 22 Apr. 1865.

<sup>3</sup>S. Peacock (ed.), 'Diary of a Southsea Tradesman', Portsmouth Archives Review 1, 1976, pp.44-59.



product, it was probably easier to become a small master in these trades. Not one food and drink enterprise was returned in 1851 as employing more than 20 workers, and while this figure is suspect it does indicate the small scale of much of this type of industry. In baking, relations between journeyman and master were further complicated by living-in (although some of the twenty enterprises so recorded in the Census may simply have had journeymen present at work on Census night), and the common practice of employing a member of the family. Something called the Portsmouth Steam Biscuit Co. was formed in 1866, purchasing a factory at Fratton, with a patent travelling oven, steam engines, and steam-driven rolling, pressing, stamping and lifting machinery; it may have actually come into operation, although it was listed in the 1874 Directory under the name of the Company's manager, William Gunnell<sup>1</sup>. The Company aimed at winning contracts from the Navy, merchant and Royal; this source had also provided occasional demand for other local bakeries, such as Smith's of Southsea who in 1854 won a contract for 100 tons of ships' biscuits; in peace-time the Navy was self-sufficient<sup>2</sup>.

The breweries, unlike baking, had a tendency to be capital-intensive, although this was by no means an inevitability. The growth of large-scale organisation in nineteenth century

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 7 Mar. 1866; Post Office Directory, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 16 Sept. 1854.

Portsmouth has been charted in some detail by Dr. Riley, and there is little need to do more than to repeat some of his conclusions. Roughly speaking, they are that the number of breweries declined in the fifties and sixties (from 55 in 1847 to 45 in 1865 and 22 in 1885); but the capital invested in each brewery expanded steadily (there were in 1847 four breweries with a rateable value of £100 or more, five in 1865 and eleven in 1885)<sup>1</sup>. These figures are more indicative of the breweries' real economic weight than those of their workforce: they used many trades, as the list of those killed in brewery accidents shows: George Dewey, under clerk; George Hoare, engineer and stoker; Edmund Sturgess, bricklayer. There were also cellarmen, coopers, labourers, carters, and so on<sup>2</sup>. The biggest breweries were the two in Penny Street and St. George's Square that belonged to the Carter family, both of which in 1847 had rateable values of over £300 (and were the only breweries to have such high ratings)<sup>3</sup>. The Carters declined in importance as the family shifted steadily to the landed estate (see Chapter 7), selling the St. George's Sq. brewery to Joseph Lush, but holding onto the town's largest brewery, in Penny St.<sup>4</sup> In terms of its civilian industrial structure, Portsmouth resembled any small county town: the

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<sup>1</sup>R. Riley, 'Rate Returns and Industrial Geography: Nineteenth Century Brewing in Portsmouth', in Mottershead & Riley (eds.), op.cit., pp.67-9.

<sup>2</sup>List of victims at Galt's Lion Gate Brewery, HT 28 Mar. 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Riley, op.cit., p.68.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.70.

few large brewers, standing head and shoulders over the surrounding workshops of the clothing and other manufacturers.

The construction industry, which was frequently dependent upon Admiralty or War Department contracts, did throw up a number of large employers. The crafts it utilized were rarely those which predominated in the Dockyard, nor did it have to compete with the Yard for raw materials. On the other hand, the small scale of land-holdings on Portsea Island tended to encourage piecemeal development, and the industry as a whole is still characteristically labour-intensive; thus it was never possible for the big firms to monopolize Portsmouth building. If the few large builders were thrust into prominence in local life, many small units continued to operate in the industry.

First, the larger builders. Benjamin Bramble (1789-1857), who left £45,000 when he died, was a contractor for the Admiralty, carrying out both repairs and new work<sup>1</sup>; in 1839, he told a House of Lords Select Committee, he was engaged on a £100,000 contract in the Yard<sup>2</sup>. Thomas Ellis Owen,

TABLE THREE: SIZE OF BUILDING EMPLOYERS ACCORDING TO 1851 CENSUS

	1-10 workers	10-19 workers	20+ workers
No. of Employers	42	4	5
Total Employed	137	51	197

Source: Manuscript census returns

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<sup>1</sup>HT 21 Nov. 1857; e.g. references to contracts in N.M.M. POR/P/5, 2 June 1841; POR/R/4, 23 Mar., 30 Apr. 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Borough of Portsmouth Quay Enlargement Bill, Minutes of Evidence Before House of Lords Committees, 1839, Vol.2, H.L.R.O.

largely famous for his speculative development of Southsea, had trained as an architect and owned a brickworks at Lump's Mill; he was also a contractor for local government.

David Miall, a brickmaker who also ran a plumbing and painting business on the side, supplied the Yard with lime, chalk, bricks, etc. until 1848. In 1846 Miall claimed to have made five million bricks in a year, selling them at a price of 42s. per thousand, while the 'prime cost' was a mere 25s. per thousand. The business, which included four kilns, Miall's home and a cottage, was rated at over £105 per annum.<sup>1</sup> Probably the largest of all was Peter Rolt, the London master builder, who received the contract to build the steam basin and factory in the Yard, employing local and 'imported' labour. At the other end of the scale were small labour-only subcontractors (accepted by the Yard, for example, in 1841<sup>2</sup>); men like John Fulljames of Blackfriars Road, bankrupted in 1864, who had started business in 1859 on his own account, with a capital of £20<sup>3</sup>. Building was one of those trades in which it was relatively easy for a workman to become a master, or a master to become a workman once again; its basic instability was not helped by seasonal fluctuations caused by the weather.

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<sup>1</sup>1850 Rate Book, P.C.R.O. 8 A; N.M.M. POR/P/42, 23 Nov. 1848; HT 26 Dec. 1846.

<sup>2</sup>N.M.M. POR/R/4, 22 Apr. 1841.

<sup>3</sup>HT, 20 Feb. 1864.

A recent writer noted that nineteenth century cities were only exceptionally characterized by economies of scale, by large steam engines, and by vast factories:

In the absence of innovations suitable for large-scale mechanization or in the face of highly elastic and unpredictable markets, small scale enterprises derived advantages from their agglomeration and the presence in their vicinity of specialized services....In short, for many industries industrialisation was limited and scale economies irrelevant, but their persistence was to classical economists not a matter of inertia but properly consistent with the working of the market economy <sup>1</sup>.

In Portsmouth the working of the market produced a small-scale manufacturing and construction sector, where (as with the construction of the Yard's steam basin and factory) projects requiring large sums of capital were organized from outside. Yet Portsmouth's market was a highly idiosyncratic one, notable for the demand created by the armed forces, and the size of the female labour force.

One would not expect these characteristics of the local economy to have much effect on the world of commerce and retail, other than to provide a market for goods and services. However, commercial activities were undoubtedly curtailed through the Admiralty's keenness to preserve naval claims over the Harbour. Moreover the Crown owned much of the rest of the Island, including land at Hilsea, all of Southsea Common, Whale Island, Horsea Island, Tipnor, and most of the surroundings of Fort Cumberland at Eastney; as well as these,

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<sup>1</sup>D. Ward, 'Victorian Cities: How Modern?', Journal of Historical Geography, 7<sup>4</sup> i, 1975, pp. 135-51. Cf. also A. Marshall, Principles of Economics, 1907, 266.

mostly with direct access to the sea, there were barracks in Portsea and Portsmouth township. The Admiralty, then, controlled large tracts of land which could have been put to commercial use (Southsea Common and Langstone Harbour were two commonly mentioned sites; another was the Mill Dam pool). It also claimed control over the Harbour and the mud in it, so that attempts by the Corporation to develop the Camber had to win Admiralty permission<sup>1</sup>. This was granted only if a thorough inspection by the Yard's naval officers ended in a positive report; it normally followed a rather complicated procedure in which the Corporation had to agree in writing that there was no challenge to the Admiralty's rights over the Harbour, and yet word the statement in such a way as to keep open the Corporation's claim to Harbour rights.

The Camber saw a number of attempts at improvement, most of which ended in a qualified success. Attempts to develop a commercial port outside the cramped little Camber had less success. The first significant Camber improvement was undertaken by the Municipal Council shortly after its installation in 1835, partly as a repudiation of the restrictive ways of the old Corporation. Initially the project was in the hands of a private Docks Company, but in 1838 the Company decided

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<sup>1</sup>There is a report on the Corporation's decision to erect a wharf on Town Quay in P.R.O., ADM 1/3435, 21 Jan., 5 Feb. 1833.

(perhaps because it was unable to raise funds) to allow the Council to take over<sup>1</sup>. The Commercial Dock Company had hoped to lease Langstone Harbour, to be entered by a canal across Southsea Common (the bar across Langstone Harbour mouth being too shallow for most shipping), and apparently won government approval. The Corporation, however, had already discussed the enlargement and repair of facilities in the Camber, adding plans for a dry dock (T.E. Owen had drawn up the latter)<sup>2</sup>.

The Camber still had to be improved through a private Act, which was opposed by the local Merchants' Association. The Association represented, in effect, those who held existing wharves and stood to lose from competition; its leading lights were Edward Casher, a wine merchant (1785-1852); William Atfield (1791-1846), a coal and timber merchant who took up wharves at Gosport in protest at the Corporation's tolls; John Lindegren, a shipping broker and importer who had been bankrupted in 1833; Richard Henry Rogers (1788- ? ), a coal merchant; and Henry Deacon, a brewer and newspaper owner<sup>3</sup>. The group had a strongly Tory tinge, which probably

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 1 Oct. 1838. 1833-4 and 1839-41 were peak years in Dock and Harbour investment; a minority of improvements were carried out by public authorities. Portsmouth's exception to this generalization may well be due to its lateness in attracting a railway link, as well as the local shortage of capital. Cf. A.G. Kenwood, 'Capital Investment in Docks, Harbours, and River Improvements in North-Eastern England, 1825-1850', Journal of Transport History no.1, 1971, pp.70-1.

<sup>2</sup>The original Commercial Dock Co. was set up to liaise with a projected direct railway line from Portsmouth to London. There is ample information on the entire affair in HT 25 Apr., 16 May, 5 Dec. 1836, 9 Jan., 16, 30 Oct., 18 Dec. 1837, 6 Aug., 1 Oct., 1838; Council Minutes, 9 Apr. 1836, 30 Jan., 20 Mar. 1837, P.C.R.O. CM 1/1; Saunders, op.cit., p. 252.

<sup>3</sup>HT, 18 Feb., 1 Apr. 1839; P.R.O. B 4/45; N.M.M. POR/M/1B, 12 Dec. 1833.

didn't help their case in the atmosphere of the 1830s; and despite its wealth - £418 were subscribed at the founding meeting - it was unable to block the improvements; its sole action seems to have been to encourage some colleagues to refuse to pay dues to the Council, as a protest against the exemption accorded to Burgesses under the old Corporation<sup>1</sup>.

The Camber gained new wharves, was thoroughly dredged, and now included a building slip. The slip was rented out to Thomas White of Gosport (1796-1863), a member of the famous Isle of Wight shipbuilding family and a friend of Garibaldi<sup>2</sup>, and who was bankrupted in 1857<sup>3</sup>, but carried on the business until his death. The business of the Camber no doubt increased as a result of the improvements but remained limited largely to coal, timber and foodstuffs<sup>4</sup>. Total dues (and rents after 1841) rose significantly (see Table Four) in the forties, but the commercial activities of the port remained well below that of neighbouring Southampton. At the beginning of 1850, for instance, there were 244 sailing vessels with a tonnage of 14,874 registered in Portsmouth while Southampton had 210 vessels of 13,498 tons; in the more important matter of steam

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<sup>1</sup>Still going on in 1842: CM 1/2, 23 May.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 16 Apr. 1864.

<sup>3</sup>CM 1/3, 2 Mar., 6 Apr., 15 June, 13 July, 23 Nov. 1857.

<sup>4</sup>It is not possible to give a really accurate estimate of the change in revenue caused by the improvements, since the accounts were badly kept and in 1837 it was discovered that the Harbour Master had been milking the dues: CM 1/1, 30 Mar., 1 May 1837.



shipping, Southampton had 25 vessels of 2,428 tons, Portsmouth only four, with a registered tonnage of 174<sup>1</sup>. In coastwise, colonial, and foreign traffic, Portsmouth did less trade than Southampton or Plymouth, let alone the larger commercial ports such as Bristol<sup>2</sup>. The erection of a dry dock in the outer

TABLE FOUR: GROSS INCOME FROM CAMBER DUES AND RENTS, 1830  
TO 1845.

	£.
1791-93 (annual average)	168
1830-32 (annual average)	1,043
1834	1,275
1835	1,271
1836	1,319
1837	1,284
1838	1,315
1842	2,773
1843	3,151
1844	3,022
1845	3,219

Sources: Rep. Mun. Corp. Comm., p. 817-9; Evidence to H.C. Sel. Committee on Camber (Portsmouth) Quay Bill, 7 May 1839; Camber Committee Report to Portsmouth Council, Report Book, 10 Nov. 1845, P.C.R.O. CC R.

Camber in the 1850s may have changed the situation slightly; but what is noteworthy for the purposes of this thesis is that the Council, who had intended to let the dock to a private concern, were forced to operate it themselves<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Accounts & Papers re. Shipping, Parl. Papers 1850, liii, p.380

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.382-6.

<sup>3</sup>P.C.R.O. CM 1/4, 17 May, 23 Nov., 21 Dec. 1858; 5 Jan., 2 Feb., 27 Apr., 10, 31 Aug. 1863.

Portsmouth's commercial activities took place on a smaller scale than at Southampton, for instance, where the port was dominated by the P. and O. line and by the Steam Packet Mail<sup>1</sup>. The mean tonnage of the Portsmouth-registered vessels was extremely small, and there was a lasting reliance on sail rather than steam. Most of the port's traffic was coastal, with very little in the way of colonial and overseas traffic. (See Tables Five and Six). Supplies for the armed forces (except, of course, servicemen living in the town outside the barracks) were provided by contractors, and shipped onto the government quays at Portsea and Gosport. The port's commerce

TABLE FIVE: MEAN TONNAGE OF VESSELS REGISTERED AT MAIN  
SOUTHERN SEAPORTS, 1850.

	Sailing ships		Steam ships	
	N=	Mean tonnage	N=	Mean tonnage
Portsmouth	244	61.0	4	43.5
Southampton	210	64.3	25	97.1
Plymouth	428	91.9	5	67.0
Bristol	283	130.8	30	124.3
London	2,735	220.4	318	302.4
England (Total)				
	18,196	139.2	865	119.2

Source: Parl. Papers, 1850, vol. liii, p.380.

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<sup>1</sup>London provided Southampton with the capital to build a graving docks, while Lancashire invested in a railway link between Southampton and the capital: see A.T. Patterson, A History of Southampton, Vol.2, 1971, pp.6,10.

TABLE SIX: TONNAGE ENTERING AND CLEARING MAIN SOUTHERN  
SEAPORTS, YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 1849 (Not Including London)

	Coastwise	Colonial	Foreign
Portsmouth	129,044	12,810	29,105
Southampton	242,662	121,700	173,482
Plymouth	518,450	43,132	50,547
Bristol	755,133	107,022	99,537

Source: as for Table Five

tends to conform to the pattern of small scale economic activity, probably allowing a certain amount of social mobility. John Oakshott, (1786- ? ) a brewer and coal-merchant, had originally been a mast-maker in the Yard; he owned no ships, but did possess shares in some lighters and boats, and had a store in York Place<sup>1</sup>.

Nor does commerce seem to have been particularly important as an employer. There were lightermen, seamen and labourers working at the Camber, as at the smaller civilian port at Flathouse Quay, but these do not seem to have been numerous. Insurance contributed second incomes to shpkeepers or solicitors, but seems to have provided few opportunities for full-time employment. Retail occupations, on the other hand, were

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<sup>1</sup>H.C. Committee on Camber Quay, op.cit.

frequent, and it is to these that we now turn.

The largest retail sector was, of course, food and drink, which between them employed 994 adult men and 521 women in 1851, continuing to expand (see Appendix). Retail outlets were divided into two kinds. The first included those catering for middle and upper class customers; the retailer was expected to have a shop in a suitable area, and to behave in a suitable way. The second comprised the countless small shops, sometimes opened in the front room<sup>1</sup>, often with very little capital and perhaps a high turnover of ownership. Towards the later part of the sixties a third type of outlet was emerging: the large retail warehouse or store, employing large numbers of workers and sometimes run by a manager. This type was probably most common in clothing.

At the top of the retail tree were the high class luxury shops, whose products were of little interest to the mass of the population (unless they were thieves). Such was Emanuel Emanuel and his brother Ezekiel's gold- and silver-smithing business, producing jewellery, medals, army and navy buttons, epaulettes, dress swords, and so on<sup>2</sup>. This market could prove difficult: the London branch of the firm, for instance, had to take proceedings against Lord Hamilton for debt in 1870,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. R. Roberts, The Classic Slum.

<sup>2</sup>In 1865 Emanuels were producing 'Marks of Distinction' for the uniforms of the crew of the Royal Yacht: 27 Mar. 1865, Clarence Yard Letter Book, Portsmouth Dockyard Archives.

which can have done the reputations and feelings of both sides no good<sup>1</sup>. William and Aaron Penley, stationers in Portsea, had started business with £80 worth of paintings, and for a number of years had kept their heads above water by teaching and painting miniatures; they had a number of military officers among their customers who had left the town without paying their debts<sup>2</sup>. Government contracts provided a possible market, not only for the Emanuels: Edwin Galt won a contract to provide the men and officers of the Hampshire revenue cutters with 2,000 gallons of rum<sup>3</sup>. George Chambers numbered Admiral Sir Graham Hammond among his customers, providing the Admiral with such delicacies as pickled tripe, vermicelli, Wiltshire cheese, and an enormous amount of treacle<sup>4</sup>.

This group's reliance upon genteel customers affected both their politics and their more general attitudes to the town. Emanuel Emanuel had particular difficulty, since his Portsea shop was on the Hard, a notoriously drunken area, but there was a more general, shared problem. Queen Street was one of the first areas in the town to be lit with gas, 100 shops declaring an interest in it as early as 1820<sup>5</sup>. To catch the tone of this group, it is possible to take one example, George Sheppard, a shoemaker employing 12 men in High Street,

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 19 Oct. 1870.

<sup>2</sup>P.R.O. B/3/4112.

<sup>3</sup>HT, 19 July 1851.

<sup>4</sup>Tradesmen's Accounts, P.C.R.O. 740 a/1.

<sup>5</sup>HT, 7 Aug. 1820.

speaking at the Portsmouth Town Commission:

I think that the town ought to be lighted for the accommodation of the gentry and visitors (who generally go to parties and balls during the summer as well as the winter), and for the public generally. I keep a large shop in the High Street, and pay heavy taxes, and am not ashamed to own that I derive my living from the upper class of persons I have just named <sup>1</sup>.

(It should be added that the town was already lit; Sheppard was attacking an unsuccessful radical attempt to save money by turning the lights off from May to August). There was probably relatively little in the way of social mobility into this sector, although one reasonably successful jeweller in High Street, Thomas H. Fiske, started off as a journeyman, taking over the business only after his master retired, having been his assistant for many years<sup>2</sup>.

At the bottom of the tree came the small general stores and grocers, supplying working class customers; even the stall-holders of the market<sup>3</sup>. These could be extremely poor, just as badly off as the poorest sailor's widow, and certainly as much a victim of the town's business cycles. In 1818, for instance, the Corporation was told by the Town Crier that the market tolls

have fallen very considerably short of your Estimation; which I most submissively beg leave to represent is in a great measure due to the pressure of the times, the very high price of almost every absolute necessity of life, and the very considerable reduction in the population of these Towns, from which the number of Stalls, particularly in Portsea, has greatly diminished; and of those which remain, many are kept by poor

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Times, 6 Apr. 1850.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 19 Mar. 1821.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. R. Scola, 'Food Markets and Shops in Manchester 1770-1870', Journal of Historical Geography, i, 1975, 153-68.

persons burdened with large families, who are utterly unable from their scanty profits to discharge the dues assessed upon them, at the enforcing of which humanity would revolt <sup>1</sup>.

Humanity might have heard this cry in 1818, but she developed acute deafness under the reformed Council, particularly after the erection of a new Market House (designed by T.E. Owen) in 1838<sup>2</sup>. Despite the cost of collecting the street tolls, it was decided in the 1860s to retain them, the better to help in "the removal of street obstructions"<sup>3</sup>. The market stallholders, at least, were tolerated; hawkers on the other hand were a nuisance, surviving largely in petitions that asked the Council to drive them out of town<sup>4</sup>. Above the stallholders and hawkers came the small shopkeepers, owners or tenants of premises large enough to hold a fixed stock. Such people were constantly poised between respectability and the bankruptcy courts. Some of them made it, only to be struck down by unforeseen disaster, such as two servants of Sir Lucius Curtis's who took a small earthenware shop, and subsequently lost their stock and their daughter in a fire<sup>5</sup>. Some, because of the small amount of capital required, entered shopkeeping without apparently being suited to it: William Fletcher, a boilermaker in the Dock Yard, left his job in 1859 to open a tobacconists, and went bankrupt four years

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<sup>1</sup>Oct. 1818, Corp. Letter Book, P.C.R.O. CE 7.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmouth Improvement Commission Minutes, P.C.R.O. G/ICQ 1/3, 30 July, 7 Aug., 24 Sept., 1838; Council Committee Reports, P.C.R.O. CCR, 15 Oct. 1838.

<sup>3</sup>P.C.R.O. CM 1/4 14 Nov. 1864.

<sup>4</sup>Eg. CCR 4 May 1848, HT 5 Feb. 1844.

<sup>5</sup>HT, 2 Nov. 1818.

later with debts of over £190<sup>1</sup>. Thomas Collins, a grocer in Charlotte Street, survived for ten years on a starting capital of £10<sup>2</sup>. At this level shopkeeping was a highly competitive business.

Employment tended to be concentrated in the larger shops, usually catering for the luxury market or selling mass-produced consumer durables to working people. Beldham and Son had started off as an independent clothing firm, going into partnership with a Gosport family in 1830, then opening an Emporium in Queen Street. By 1851 they employed 32 male assistants and had four apprentices (including two relatives) living in<sup>3</sup>. The Landport Drapery Bazaar, unlike Beldham's, stressed cheapness in its advertisements, and was one of the first establishments to find it worthwhile to close at the (early) hour of eight p.m. on Saturdays<sup>4</sup>. If wage labour was concentrated in shops such as the L.D.B. or Beldham's, self-employment accounted for much of the workforce in retailing. The sector saw a number of changes in this period. Large retail outlets like L.D.B. emerged, while more modest shopkeepers might decide to live away from their shop. This came at a relatively late stage in retailing<sup>5</sup>, but was nonetheless

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 14 Nov. 1863.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 20 Feb. 1864.

<sup>3</sup>HT 29 Mar., 4 Oct. 1830; 1851 Census.

<sup>4</sup>HT, 24 Sept. 1853; 17 Jan. 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. D. Alexander, Retailing in England During the Industrial Revolution, 1970, pp. 185-7.



TABLE SEVEN: NUMBER OF LOCK-UP RETAIL PREMISES IN SELECTED  
TRADES, 1859

	No. of lock-up shops	Total no. of outlets
Draperies	1	156
Bakeries	2	103
Outfitters	3	93
Jewellers	2	35
Grocers	4	184
Ironmonger	2	18
Shopkeepers, general dealers	0	110

Source: W. White, History, Gazeteer and Directory of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, 1859.

apparent in the 1859 trades directory (see Table Seven). For the majority of shopkeepers, though, the shop and the home were one and the same place, with status being closely defined by the nature of the trade. An old inhabitant of Portsea looked back at this period from 1900 with something like nostalgia:

In those good old times trade was not a bar, as it is now, to some social circles. Then people lived over their shops, took a pride in their residences, and each family circle was but the part of a larger social circle within the reach of all. We had little of the paltry pride of 1900 - that of Mr. Jones not associating with Mr. Smith because Jones lived at a private residence <sup>1</sup>.

The writer probably stressed the cohesion at the expense of the undoubtedly fierce competition: a Grocers' Association

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Times, 31 Mar. 1900 (in Pescott Frost scrap-books, P.C.L.)

was formed after 'considerable trouble' by William Pink in the 1850s, and then only under the stimulus of the dreaded Adulteration Act<sup>1</sup>. However significant the retail sector as a whole, it was split into relatively small units, competing fiercely with one another - as shop assistants were to discover, for 'moonlighting' employers always broke any attempt to shorten the working day.

The common characteristic of work in nineteenth century Portsmouth, was that, apart from the government industries, most of it took place in small establishments, often in fierce competition with one another. To this diverse environment came men and women of equally diverse backgrounds. To examine this in detail, it might be best to consider four main categories: first, civilian men aged 56 or more in 1851, alive at the time of the Wars and perhaps attracted by wartime prosperity; second, adult men civilians aged under 56 in 1851; thirdly adult women; fourthly, servicemen. For all, the

TABLE EIGHT: BIRTHPLACES OF INHABITANTS, CENSUS SAMPLE 1851

	Portsea Island, Cosham & Gosport	Elsewhere in Hants, IoW.	Elsewhere in G.B.	Ireland & Overseas
Male, 56+	40	24	28	2
Male, under 56	297	92	149	31
Women	554	177	313	54
Servicemen	52	10	83	18

Source: Ten per cent sample of 1851 census; these figures represent adults only, and do not include those who were institutionalized in barracks or the poor house or the convict hulks.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

largest group came from the Portsmouth area. What above all differentiated the town's population from that of, say, Oldham or Manchester, was the absence of an Irish element of any size. There were some Irishmen, obviously, but in all cases they were nearly outnumbered by people born elsewhere outside Great Britain - Poland, France, the Channel Isles, even in one case at sea. Thus, though Portsmouth's population may have been diverse, it lacked the flavour given to many large towns by Irish immigration: the Irish provided only 2.2% of the adult population living in Portsmouth<sup>1</sup>.

Though a local background was common enough, it was still a minority experience - just: fifty one per cent of adults were not born locally. Many were from the Wessex region of Hants, Wilts and Dorset, most of them moving in from rural Hampshire. Some of these came from the old wooden shipbuilding centres<sup>2</sup>. Thomas Nineham, a sixty year-old shipwright, was one of these: born on the Isle of Wight, he was married to a local woman, and lived in Landport. Other shipwrights included Edward James, 28, from Brixham in Devon; William Eales, 74, from Blackholm in Devon. Other rural craftsmen came into the town, where they were easily adapted to local needs: from Dorset came blacksmiths like the family of Thomas Hardy's second wife, the Dugdales from Wareham<sup>3</sup>; Dorset also provided masons in plenty,

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<sup>1</sup>Irishmen and women constituted fourteen per cent of Preston's adults in 1851 (M. Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire, (Cambridge, 1971, p.37). In Oldham they formed 2% of heads of household, compared with 3% in Northampton and 4% in Shields, but one imagines that Irish immigrants would have been disproportionately heavy among the inmates of lodging houses, etc. (Foster, op.cit., p.77).

<sup>2</sup>See Holland, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup>R. Gittings, The Older Hardy, 1978, p.122.

like Richard Boyd, 48, of Sturminster, or Charles Smith, 32, of Gillingham (who had brought his Wareham-born wife). Moreover, these men were overwhelmingly from un- or semi-skilled trades: 58 per cent of the Hampshire or Isle of Wight men (aged 21-55) were from the lower strata of labour, while only 49 per cent of the native population were. While 25 per cent of the locally-born had a skill, only 16 per cent of Hampshire or Island men had one. If in Preston the unskilled labourer might have spoken with an Irish accent, in Portsmouth he probably spoke with a deep rural burr.

What of the more skilled migrants? A rough glance suggests that a small, but still disproportionate, number came from London or Lancashire. A number brought with them skills that simply were not available in Hampshire. Many were metal workers: Thomas Braddock, 40, an engineer from Mottram in Cheshire; Joseph Riley, 36, an Ironmoulder from Manchester (and with a Worcester-born wife); George Audley, 26, a Liverpool-born boilermaker, whose household included a visitor who was also a Liverpool boilermaker (Audley's wife came from Sheerness). Some of the more exotic immigrants also brought a trade with them, although these tended to be the almost universal skills of migrant Jews. Isaac Joseph, a Pole aged 52, worked as a silversmith; interestingly enough, his wife was a Dorset woman, from Poole.

If the working experiences of Portsmouth's population were diverse, ethnically, they were fairly homogeneous. Although

long accustomed to seeing seamen of all shapes, sizes and colours (even of all sexes: there was at least one black woman discovered under a blue jacket)<sup>1</sup>, local inhabitants were likely to have been born in the town, or to have followed well-trodden paths to get there. Their accents might sound slightly odd, and even comical, to a Portsmouth ear; but they would not have sounded as outlandish as the tones of Donald Farfrae did to the startled inhabitants of Casterbridge. When a Yorkshireman spoke at a Cooperative Society tea party in 1861, the local paper was as interested in his accent as by what he had said<sup>2</sup>. There was nearly as much likelihood of meeting an immigrant Jew as there was of coming across an Irishman, a fact which (since many of the Jews seem to have been self-employed) probably helped to increase the cohesion of the local working class community.

The shared ethnic and regional attributes of Portsmouth's workpeople also extended to many employers, contributing to the successful assimilation of types of social imagery which grouped masters and men together as the 'industrious classes'. A sense of the shared experience of a whole class of wage workers, with a distinct identity and interests, was hardly encouraged by working life. Dockyard men worked in a large unit, with its own traditions and work-ethic, epitomized in

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<sup>1</sup>See e.g., Hants Courier, 4 Sept. 1815.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmouth Guardian, 10 Jan. 1861.

the Yard's distinctive approach to industrial relations. Outside the Yard, men and women were employed in a forest of shops, factories and workshops, closer in scale to shrubs than trees. In the civilian trades, technology changed slowly; indeed, capital equipment was frequently supplied by the workers. In the Yard, technological changes were slow, but they did affect most of the trades in differing ways. It would have been surprising if the diversity of work experiences had led on to a perception of the underlying, shared processes of class. Rather, social positions were likely to be perceived in terms of cultural identities: how one behaved, at work or at worship or at play.<sup>1</sup> Yet there were obviously levels of status which could only be attained by men of money; not by women, whose social position in the bourgeoisie was determined by the position of the men in their lives (however much women might mould their destinies within these limits). The interplay of money, status and power is discussed in the following chapters.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. A. Mason, A History of Association Football, 1863-1915, forthcoming, esp. Ch. viii; E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth Century Society: Class Struggle without classes', Social History, iii, 1978, pp. 133-65; G.S. Jones, 'Working Class Culture and Working Class Politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class', Journal of Social History, vii, 1974, pp. 460-508 - but see the same author's 'Class Expression versus Social Control?', History Workshop, iv, 1977, esp. pp. 169-70, where the earlier emphasis on cultural expression in processes of class formation is replaced by a theoretical priority upon the production process.

APPENDIX I

MANUFACTURING TRADES MENTIONED IN THE 1823 DIRECTORY TO  
PORTSEA ISLAND

<u>Trade</u>	<u>No. of units listed</u>	<u>% in Portsmouth Town</u>
Boot & Shoe makers	46	21.7
Tailors & clothiers	39	38.5
Brewers	17	29.4
Watchmakers	15	61.5
Chandlers	16	68.8
Hatters	14	42.9
Cabinet Makers & Upholsterers	14	0.0
Curriers	10	30.0
Coopers	9	55.6
Brushmakers	6	33.3
Saddlers	6	50.0
Tin Plate workers	7	42.9
Bookbinders	6	0.0
Clothing accessories	6	16.7
Shipwrights	5	100.0
Sailmakers	3	100.0
Printers	4	75.0
Ropemakers	4	25.0
Engraver	4	0.0
Household utensils	5	20.0
Brass founders	2	100.0
Iron founders	2	0.0
Stay makers	2	0.0
Turner, millwright, coach mkr	3	33.3
Assoc. shipbuilding	2	100.0
Misc. manufactures	5	100.0
Total:-	252	Average: 39.7

Not included here: Baking, milling, jewellery, milliners, building, transport.

APPENDIX II

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF PORTSMOUTH, 1851-1871. ADULT MALES.

	1851	1871	% change
Farming	529	777	46.9
Fishing	93	114	22.6
Quarrying and mining	19	69	263.2
Brickmaking	102	81	-20.6
Building management	77	161	109.1
Building operatives	1372	2096	52.8
Road & Railway making	34	132	288.2
Tool & Machine manufacture	246	482	89.4
Shipbuilding	2434	3758	54.4
Iron & steel manufac- ture	283	416	47.0
Copper, tin, lead	110	152	38.2
Precious metals	17	17	0.0
Earthenware & glass manufacture	0	16	-
Gas, salt & water	36	109	202.8
Furs and leather working	34	34	0.0
Glue, soap & tallow making	25	30	20.0
Woodworkers	280	307	9.6
Furniture making	168	194	15.5
Carriage & harness making	95	151	58.9
Rope & canvas manufacture	141	59	-58.1
Textiles manufacture	22	56	154.6
Dress & clothing	1184	1425	20.4
Food preparation	25	28	12.0
Baking	316	409	29.4
Drink preparation	141	207	46.8
Watch & instrument making	54	87	61.1
Printing & bookmaking	69	104	50.7



	1851	1871	% change
Unspecified manufacture	25	62	148.0
Miscellaneous petty manufacture	31	63	103.2
Warehouses & docks	62	143	130.6
Ocean navigation (civil)	1103	1304	18.2
Inland navigation	169	85	-49.7
Railways	90	202	124.4
Road Transport	104	345	231.7
Coal dealing	41	107	161.0
Raw material dealing	60	85	41.7
Dress & cloth dealing	189	258	36.4
Food dealing	653	971	48.7
Pubs, hotels, wine & spirits dealing	341	564	65.4
Lodging & coffee houses	30	45	50.0
Furniture dealing	27	73	170.4
Publications & stationery	34	72	111.8
Household utensils dealing	69	94	36.2
General dealing	199	436	119.1
Unspecified dealing	107	152	42.1
Banking, Insurance, accounts	81	210	159.3
General labour	1513	1508	-0.3
Central administration	57	313	443.1
Local administration	36	76	101.1
Army	2592	3036	17.1
Royal Navy	3363	8575	155.0
Police & Prisons	107	433	304.7
Law	67	80	19.4
Medicine	109	153	40.4
Art & amusements	120	193	60.8
Literature & science	9	10	11.1
Education	89	125	40.4
Religion	65	93	43.1

	1851	1871	% change
Religion	3	14	366.7
Indoor service	1724	2725	58.1
Personal services (extra)	976	1483	51.9
Property owning	733	1107	51.0
Indefinite	160	23	-85.6
Dependents	13667	20506	50.0
Total	21763	31504	44.8

THE OCCUPATIONS OF ADULT WOMEN IN PORTSMOUTH, 1851-1871

	1851	1871	% change
Farming	38	44	15.8
Building	4	3	-25.0
Furniture manufacture	17	26	52.9
Textiles & dying	33	55	66.7
Dress manufacture	274	304	10.9
Baking & confectionary	13	45	246.2
Drink & tobacco preparation	4	9	125.0
Unspecified manufacture		78	-
Miscellaneous manufactures	11	26	136.4
Dress dealing	15	96	540.0
Food dealing	224	337	50.4
Pubs, hotels, wines, spirits	297	423	42.4
Lodging & coffee houses	127	280	120.5
Furniture dealing	9	23	155.6
Household utensils dealing	14	12	-14.3
Stationary & publications	19	21	10.5
General dealers	117	235	100.9
Miscellaneous dealing	9	6	-33.3
Transport	0	6	-
General labour	5	3	-40.0
Commercial clerks	0	3	-
Central administration	9	1	-88.9
Local administration	6	17	183.3
Prison officers	0	3	-
Medicine	159	287	80.5

	1851	1871	% change
Art & amusement	15	49	226.7
Literature & science	1	6	500.0
Education	272	440	61.8
Domestic service	209	271	29.7
Personal services (extra)	73	117	60.3
Propertied	185	160	-13.5
Indefinite	779	507	-34.9
Total:	20717	32392	56.4

## CHAPTER FOUR: SOME ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE FORMATION OF THE BOURGEOISIE

The connotations of the word 'bourgeoisie' often prevent historians, in England at any rate, from relying too heavily upon it. Yet these connotations imply the possession of wealth - lots of it. At their most extreme, one recalls early communist cartoons depicting a fat, greasy, top-hatted fiend, squatting on a pile of golden coins, while below in the fields and factories the masses sweat and toil. The true social scientist would drop the word 'bourgeoisie' with distaste, and choose 'something a bit more sanitary and 'value-free'. Whatever we called the phenomenon, however, it would still be there, and it would still be rich. How riches were distributed in nineteenth century Portsmouth forms the substance of this chapter, trying to catch the ways that economic position can be said to characterize an identifiable social grouping.

Wealth and its distribution have become a well-studied area in the last few years<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, British records do

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<sup>1</sup>It has been studied in a variety of ways. Land values have been examined by E.J. Buckatzsch, 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1086-1843', Economic Hist.Rev., 2nd ser., iii, 1950-51; J.P. Kain, 'Tithe surveys and landownership', Journal of Hist. Geography i, 1975, 39-48. Income tax records have been used by P.K. O'Brien, 'British Incomes and Property in the early Nineteenth Century', Economic Hist.Rev. 2nd ser., xii, 1959, 255-67; Probate records have been used by J. Foster, op.cit.; John Vincent, Pollbooks, 1967, 'Introduction'. Probate records and tax data have been fruitfully combined by W.D. Rubinstein in a number of pieces, the most useful of which is 'Wealth, Elites, and the Class Structure of Modern Britain', Past & Present lxxvi, 1977, pp.99-126; some of the same material is also covered in the same

not in their completeness equal the wide variety of sources used by Adeline Daumard and her collaborators in their studies of the French bourgeoisie<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Daumard was able to call upon tax records, electoral assessments, marriage contracts and probate inventories to describe, not only what a man was worth, but exactly what it was that he owned. The main sources used by the two chief British students of this area, John Foster and William Rubinstein, are unfortunately less informative. Income tax valuations are aggregates for a given area, not individual assessments, and anyway are assessed upon the business rather than the man<sup>2</sup>. Probate

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author's 'Men of property: some aspects of occupation, inheritance and power among top British wealthholders' in P. Stanworth and A. Giddens (eds), Elites and Power in British Society, Cambridge 1974, pp.144-69, and 'The Victorian Middle Classes: Wealth, Occupation and Geography', Economic Hist. Rev., 2nd ser. xxx, 1977, pp.602-23.

<sup>1</sup>A. Daumard, Les bourgeois de Paris au xix siècle, Paris 1970; Daumard et al, Les fortunes françaises au xixème siècle: Enquête sur la répartition et la composition des capitaux privés à Paris, Lyon, Lille, Bordeaux et Toulouse d'après l'enregistrement des déclarations de succession, Paris 1973.

<sup>2</sup>See the Thirteenth Report of the Board of Inland Revenue, Parl. Papers 1870, xx, p.336.

valuations have three main drawbacks: the occupational descriptions given in them are often misleading, since they are effectively self-images; they show what a man was worth at the time of his death, not when he was economically active; and as no inventories are available, it is not really possible to tell what the wealth under consideration actually consisted of - shares, machinery, books, whatever.

My answer to these problems - which are predominantly ones of research technique rather than conceptualization - is to try to follow Foster in producing a detailed local study<sup>1</sup>. It differs from Foster in that, like Rubinstein, it asks, not how wealthy certain pre-given categories were, but rather, how is it best possible to categorize the wealthy? Foster's approach, founded upon a definition of the bourgeoisie that is restricted to employers and political leaders, does not identify the wealthy as a coherent social class: rather, he takes a behaviourally coherent social group and analyses its wealth. One group of wealthy that is thus omitted, it is suggested here, is that of females (and other rentier groups)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>The division between 'logic' and 'research' has been questioned: see B. Schwarz, R. Johnson and G. McLellan, Economy, Culture, Concept, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Occasional Paper, 1978, pp.18-21. The ways that Foster and Rubinstein conceive of social class do affect the way that they use a statistical methodology to draw certain conclusions; I would argue that they do this in a rather static and positivist way; for the purposes of this thesis, however, it is probably wise to operate with the customary distinctions between technique and conceptualization.

<sup>2</sup>Should we accept definitions of 'social class' that lend themselves to quantification in such a way? Counting

The source exploited most fruitfully by Rubinstein and Foster are the probate valuations. These were estimates made after the subject's death, upon unsettled personal wealth and freehold property let for a fixed period of years; in broad terms, these sources exclude most landed property and heirlooms (i.e. real estate and settled personal estate)<sup>1</sup>. On the whole, they are a pretty unreliable guide to a man's resources: they measure only certain types of wealth, they measure them at the time of death, and they do not tell what economic goods the estate consisted of. I am therefore sceptical of the claim that probate records can provide 'a general taxonomy of wealth among particular group'<sup>2</sup>. To shift the metaphor, probate valuations might give us an approximate guide to a terrain whose peaks and valleys will remain shrouded in mist; and at some places we will know little more than 'Ere be treasure' or 'Ere be dragons'.

The exploitation of other sources which say something about a person's economic resources might help clear away the mists and myths. Ratebooks, giving the annual rental value of all

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the rich may not give us the bourgeoisie as a class, but it can give us an index to the presence of certain social relationships which also entail the formation of a bourgeoisie. I do not find myself in complete agreement with E.P. Thompson's radical rejection of the statistical approach, therefore (cf. Thompson's immensely fertile essay, 'Eighteenth century English Society: Class Struggle without classes?', Social History iii, 1978, pp.146-50).

<sup>1</sup>There is a useful guide to the sources in W.D. Rubinstein & D. Duman, 'Probate valuations: A tool for the historian', Local Historian xi, 1974, pp.68-71. The probate records used here are those of the local Archdeaconry and Archbishopric Courts between 1821 and 1858, and the County registers from 1858 to 1870 (all in Hampshire County Record Office), and the registers of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury from 1821 to 1858 (P.R.O. PROB/8). A comparison between modern Portsmouth and Southampton which makes a number of useful suggestions about the local social structures is in F. Gladstone, The Politics of Planning, 1976, ch.iv and esp. pp.57-62.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.71.



property in the Borough, have been used in an attempt to gauge holdings of real estate. The values stated in the rate-books, however, are somewhat problematic: they are the result of estimates made by the parish officers<sup>1</sup>, which in itself makes one slightly suspicious; the sum decided upon did not have to be the actual rent, but rather was a notional figure, corresponding to what the poor law authorities felt the market would bear; since there were 14,290 assessed properties in 1851, I preferred arbitrarily to study those assessed at £50 per annum or over<sup>2</sup>. So, although a rich man is likely to live in a house with a high assessment, foggy patches remain.

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<sup>1</sup>A committee of fifteen ratepayers assisted the parish officers when Portsea parish was re-assessed in 1837-8: P.R.O. MH 12/10916, 18 Sept. 1837; P.C.R.O. CHU 3/2E/2, 8. 29 Sept. 1837.

<sup>2</sup>Parl. Papers 1852 xlv, p.297; £50 is an arbitrary figure, but it is roughly what a permanently-employed, semi-skilled worker could hope to pick up in the course of the year, so it is not entirely without *raison d'être*. Even worse, many wealthy men are excluded from this account, since they did not own a single property worth over £50 but rather owned many separate ones worth less than that sum; the enormous number of cases involved meant that I could only hope to spot men owning houses of less than £50 that totalled more than that sum, when the houses stood side by side.

Two less important sources are also used in this chapter, income tax returns and company records. The records of the Inland Revenue are sparse, and weeded in such a way as to justify the occupational paranoia of some historians, but they do give for certain years, listed by types of income, the aggregate assessments for the whole town. This does not lead us very far, since it does not give any idea of how wealth was distributed among individuals, but it does permit a crude comparison of the gross wealth of different towns. Company records are used to sketch in the lines of shareholding patterns. Since many of the sources which are accessible refer to defunct companies, the possibility is that these records will understate the wealth of people who preferred to invest in low-risk areas such as the Consolidated Funds; it takes no account of the family firm, which in Portsmouth as elsewhere was the characteristic form of entrepreneurial activity<sup>1</sup>. Shareholding patterns give, once more, a rough and inaccurate measurement of wealth.

There is a reason for this rather lengthy preamble around the sources. My image of a map of wealthholding (an image that might be somewhat clichéd at the best) implies a firm, static reality, which the cartographer systematically investigates and measures with the sophisticated equipment that

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<sup>1</sup>P.L. Payne, British Entrepreneurs in the Nineteenth Century, 1974, ch.iii.

the Ordnance Survey possesses nowadays. This is not the case; the telescope and measuring stick and prism issued to this cartographer are old and rickety, well made but none too accurate. This still leaves the problem of the hills, rocks, plateaux and valleys that are measured, and might be supposed to be almost unchanging:

Nature is ever green, or rather travels  
By such long routes  
That she seems still 1.

The route from workman to master, as I have tried to show, was not necessarily a long one, although few small masters ever became wealthy men. The route from counter or counting house to bankruptcy court also varied in distance. More than this, however, comes to mind when the metaphor of a map is in question: there is the whole question of how social class is 'translated' by statistical indices such as those arising from occupational classifications of wealth-holders or census categories. This is a large question, and hardly likely to be solved in this thesis, but it should not be supposed that I regard probate valuations or rateable values as in themselves definitions of social class; rather, they are symptoms or indices of the presence of the relations which we might designate through a concept of class<sup>2</sup>.

Eighteenth century Portsmouth characteristically derived its

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<sup>1</sup>G. Leopardi, La ginestra.

<sup>2</sup>This position seems to have found its classic statement in the preface to E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class. Of parallel relevance are Eduardo Grenzi's strictures upon the 'quantitative cartesianism' of Daumard and her collaborators: 'Il "daumardismo": una via senza uscita?', Quaderni Storici, 29/30, 1975, pp.729-37.

wealth from the profits to be made in supplying the armed forces. Defoe passed through the place in the 1720s, remarking that the recent War had 'really made the whole Place Rich, and the Inhabitants of Portsmouth are quite another sort of People than they were a few Years before the Revolution'<sup>1</sup>. The Admiralty's hold over the close Corporation was paid for with a fat wad of contracts - contracts for beer, bread, ordnance, ropes, stone, candles, timber and bedding<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, the Dockyard, the largest industry in the town, was not run for profit, and therefore did not lead to direct capital accumulation in industries: if it led to any capital accumulation, it was through a chain of contractors, or retailers who sold goods to the Yard workers. There were other ways of making a killing: such as

the very large, but secret Traffick they /the local dealers/ constantly carry on with the Shipping; which is so very notorious, that tho' we have a Custom-House here, I am credibly informed, the whole Income for Imports and Exports, rarely pays the Officer's Salaries 3.

And even the profits of smuggling (the author added) had to be shared with the dockyardmen who humped the contraband around the town. So, Wilkins reported, there were 'no Men

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit., vol.1, p.138.

<sup>2</sup>The role of government contracts in the town's political economy at this time has been painstakingly reconstructed by Surry and Thomas (eds) op.cit., pp.xxiv-xxix.

<sup>3</sup>From R. Wilkins, *The Borough: Being a Faithful, tho' Humorous, Description, of one of the Strongest Garrisons and Seaport Towns in Great Britain, 1748*, repr. in ibid., see p.71.

of Property among us...(two Persons excepted, who were infamous for their Gains, by the Methods aforesaid)'<sup>1</sup>. A century later, the Municipal Corporations Commission noted that 'There are few persons of large fortune; the property is considered to be more equally distributed here than elsewhere'<sup>2</sup>. There seems to have been some foundation for this claim.

Examination of probate values for the three decades 1821-30, 1841-50 and 1861-70 shows that, compared with Southampton, Portsmouth's wealth was quite evenly distributed. Portsmouth's population throughout the period was twice that of its neighbour, yet it produced fewer extremely wealthy citizens: Portsmouth produced only one fortune of over £40,000 in these decades, while Southampton produced several. At the other end of the scale, Portsmouth had more than its fair share of small fortunes: 107 inhabitants left less than £500 and more than 250, compared with a mere 23 from Southampton in the decade 1821-30. Similar results emerge for middle-sized fortunes: only 12 people from Southampton left fortunes of between £1,000 and £1,500 in 1821-30, compared with forty from Portsmouth. The disproportion between the two towns vanishes at the middle levels in the 1840s and '60s, and that at the lower levels is not apparent in the 1860s. As one

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Report, op.cit., p.819.

might expect, while Portsmouth's economy was not congenial to the production of large-scale wealth at any time, it nourished small and middle-sized businesses in times of prolonged war (the assumption being that the 1821-30 decade saw the deaths of men and women who had been active during the Napoleonic and Revolutionary Wars).

Neither Portsmouth or Southampton produced any wealthy men or women to compete with the merchants and bankers of the City of London<sup>1</sup>. Southampton, however, does seem to have possessed a wealthy elite that was more affluent and more numerous than Portsmouth's. Portsmouth, on the other hand, had a long 'tail' of small capitalists and others who actually overlapped to some extent with skilled workers<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps the largest of the working class wealth-holders was John Cowdrey, a superannuated joiner from the dockyard, who died in 1844 leaving £8,000, naming the Tory lawyer George Cornelius Stigant as an executor<sup>3</sup>; H. Knight, a shipwright, left £6,000. Even the kindest mind might ask whether fortunes such as these, which certainly didn't appear in Southampton, had any connection with straying naval stores. One also wonders how Charles Brune Henville came by the largest fortune to be made in either town between 1820 and 1870: Vicar of Portsmouth

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<sup>1</sup>Rubinstein, 'Wealth, Elites....'

<sup>2</sup>Foster, op.cit., pp. 163-6. Cf. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, 1968, p.274; Gray, The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh, 1976, pp.108-13.

<sup>3</sup>P.R.O. PROB 8/237.

FIGURE ONE: PROBATE VALUATIONS OF UNDER £3,000 IN PORTSMOUTH AND SOUTHAMPTON.

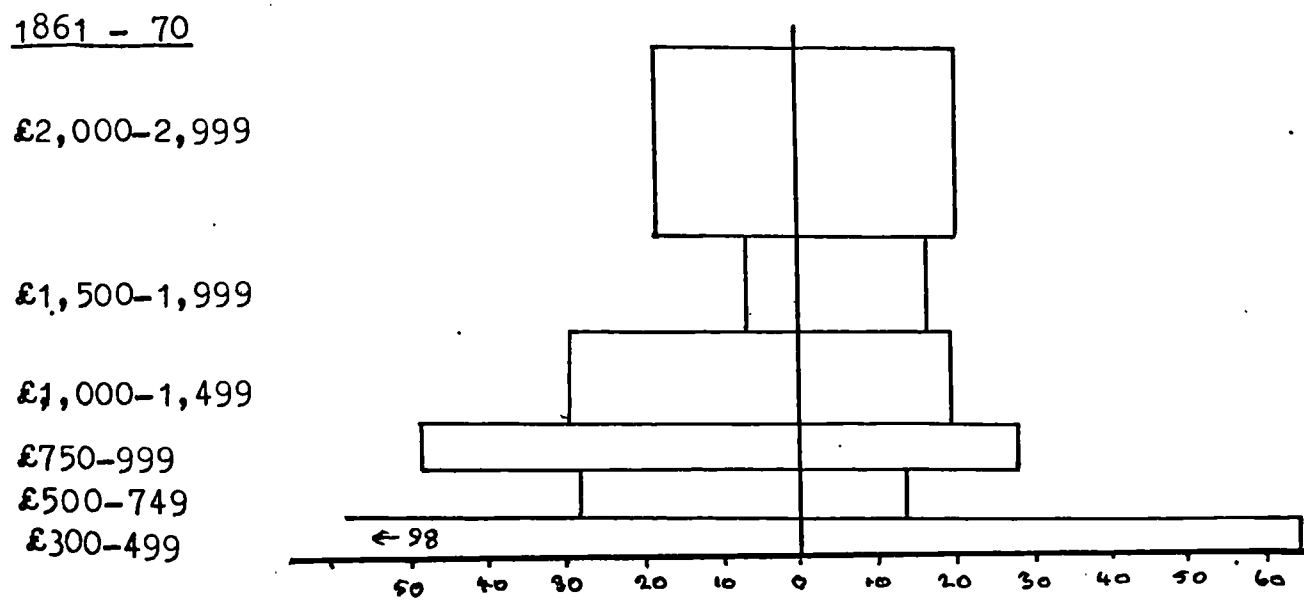
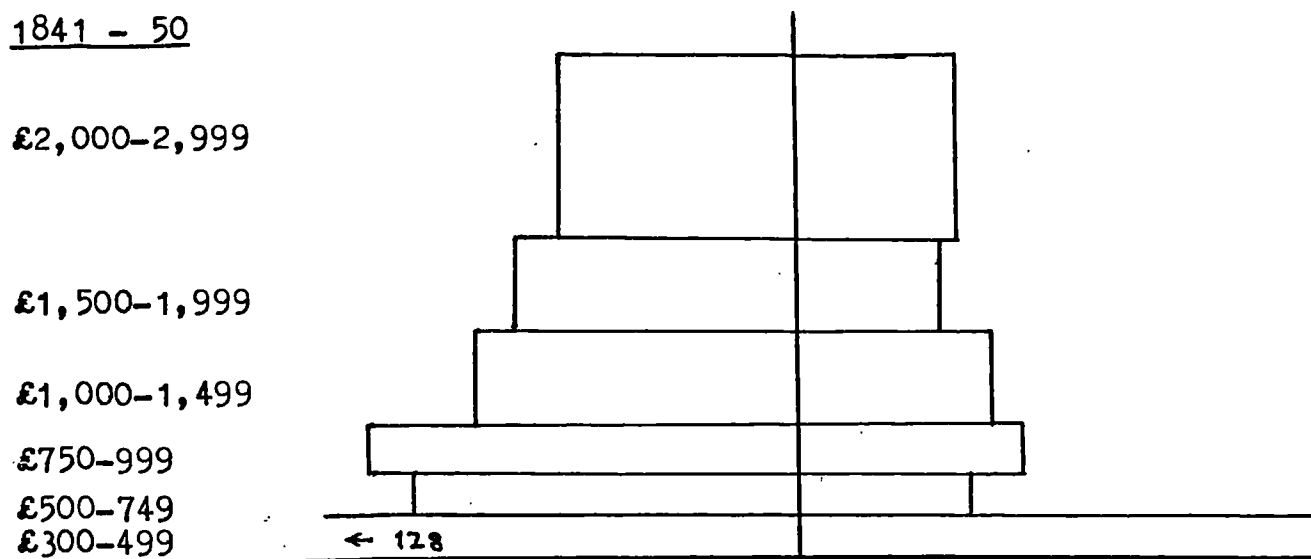
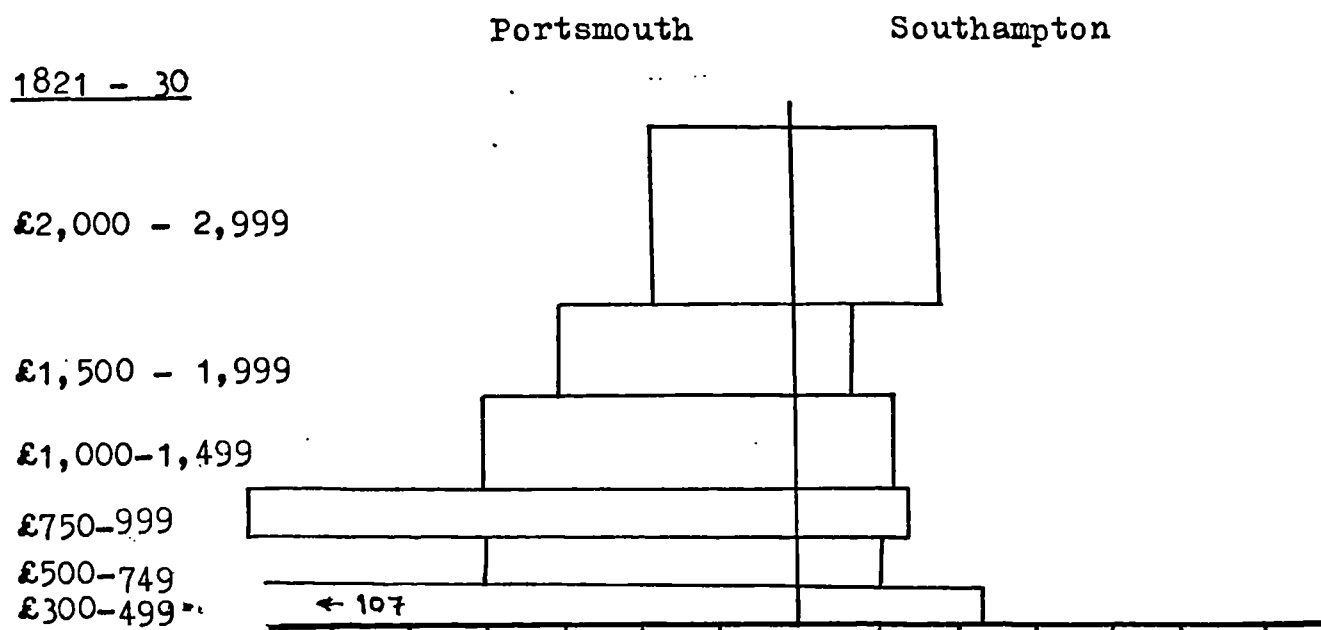
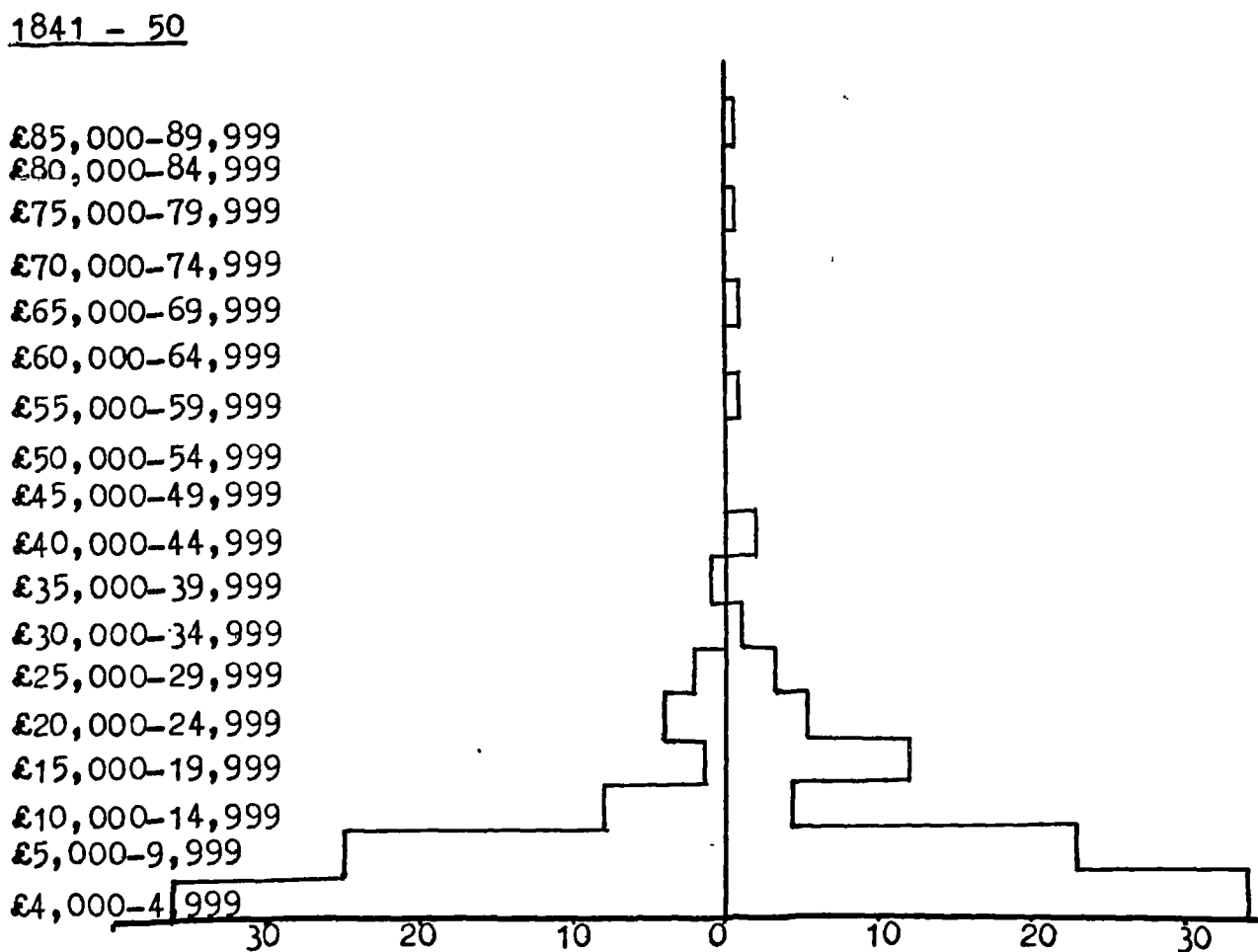
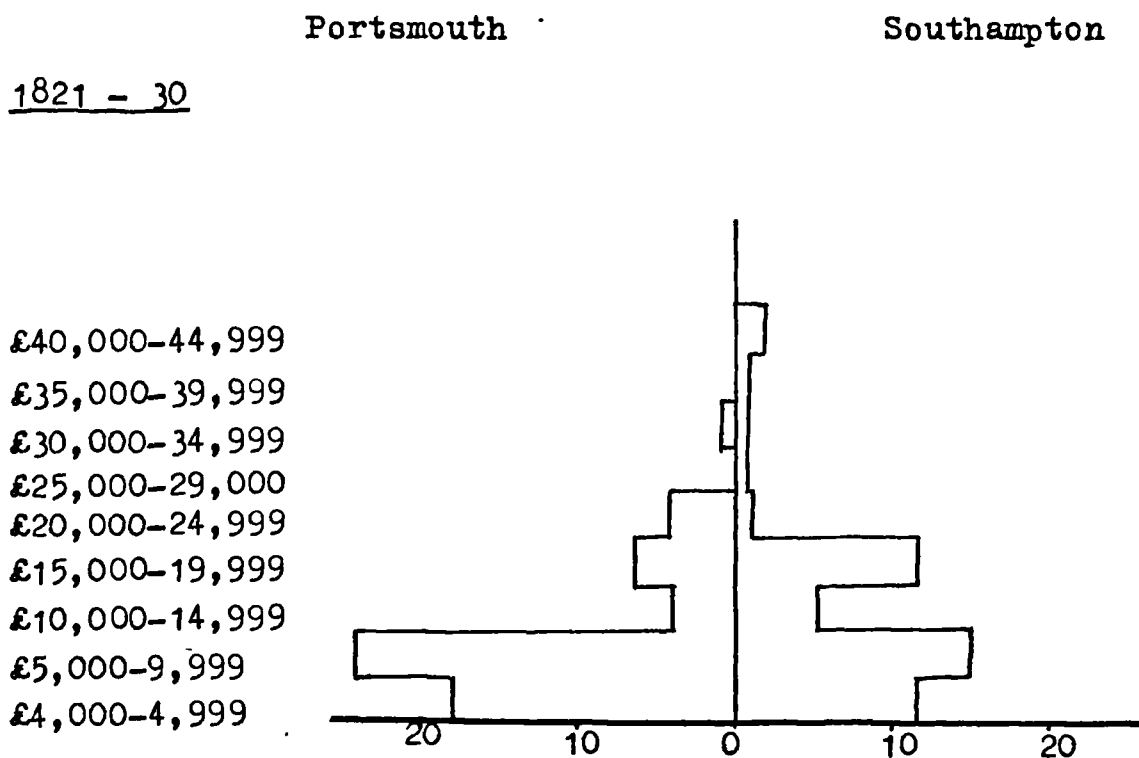
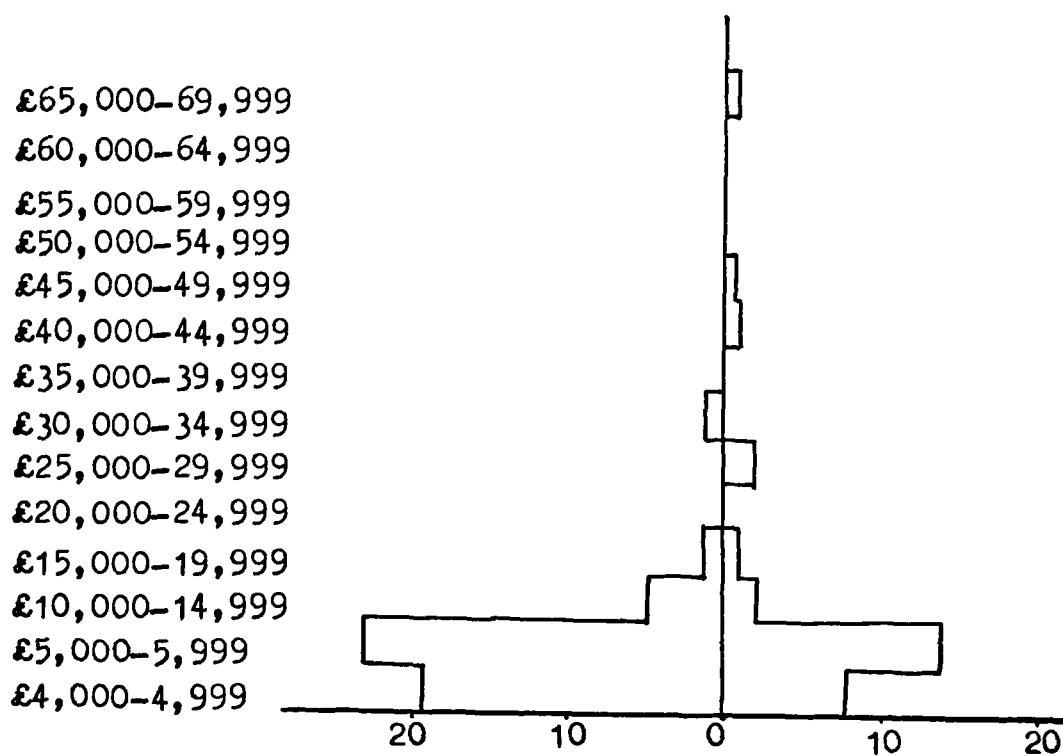


FIGURE TWO: PROBATE VALUATIONS, £4,000 AND OVER.







and Portsea, and perpetual curate of Hamble-en-le-Rice (where he died), Henville left £120,000 in 1849<sup>1</sup>.

The occupational spread of the higher fortunes (set, arbitrarily, at £5,000 plus) is shown in the bar chart of Figure Three. Several points should be noted. First, Southampton appears to possess a larger population of 'oisifs' - wealthy men and women of independent means; this is partly the result of its lingering 'spa' reputation, but I am afraid that it is also partly due to the more effective identification of individuals in Portsmouth, where men describing themselves as 'Gent.' or 'Esq.' were often bundled off unceremoniously into another category<sup>2</sup>. Two further minor points stand out: Southampton's failure to produce a single wealthy artizan while Portsmouth had four, and Southampton's absence of wealthy landowners compared with Portsmouth's three. The last point is easily explained: in 1853, it was reported that there were 4,900 acres of arable land on Portsea Island, and only 250 acres in Southampton<sup>3</sup>.

Aside from the clearly exceptional groups, the main patterns of wealth stand out clearly. Professionals in both towns had

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<sup>1</sup>P.R.O. PROB 8/242.

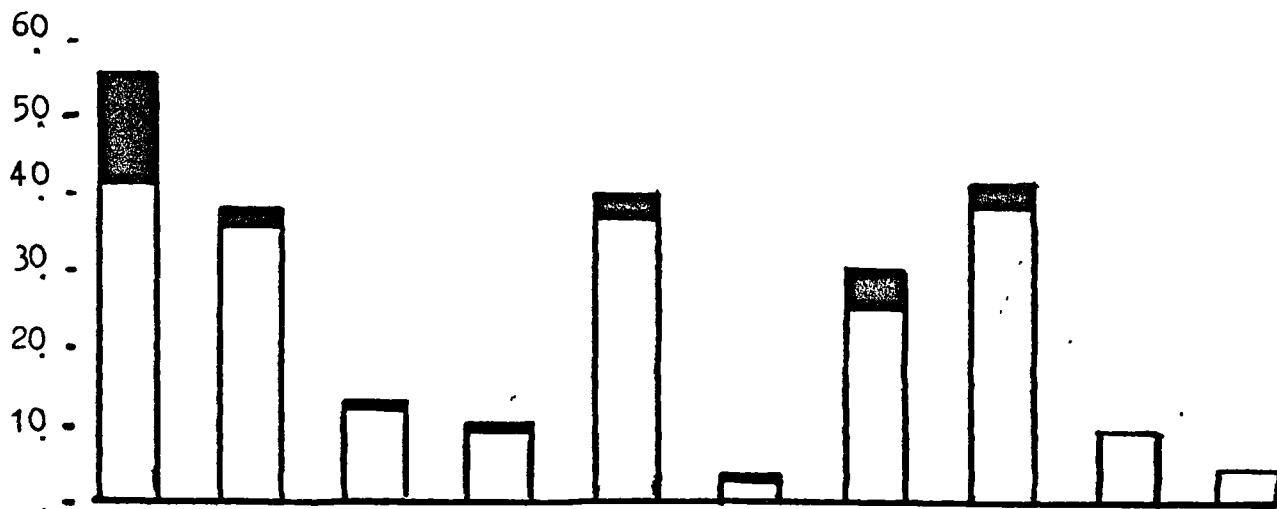
<sup>2</sup>The 'Esq.s' included Thomas Jackson, who has already appeared before us in the dress of a tradesman (p.59 above); he was placed with the industrialists. The 'oisifs' formed only a part of the 'urban gentry', who included some officers, landowners, and those business or professional men who identified with Southsea Society.

<sup>3</sup>Poor Law Board Report, Parl. Papers 1854 xxix, p.423.

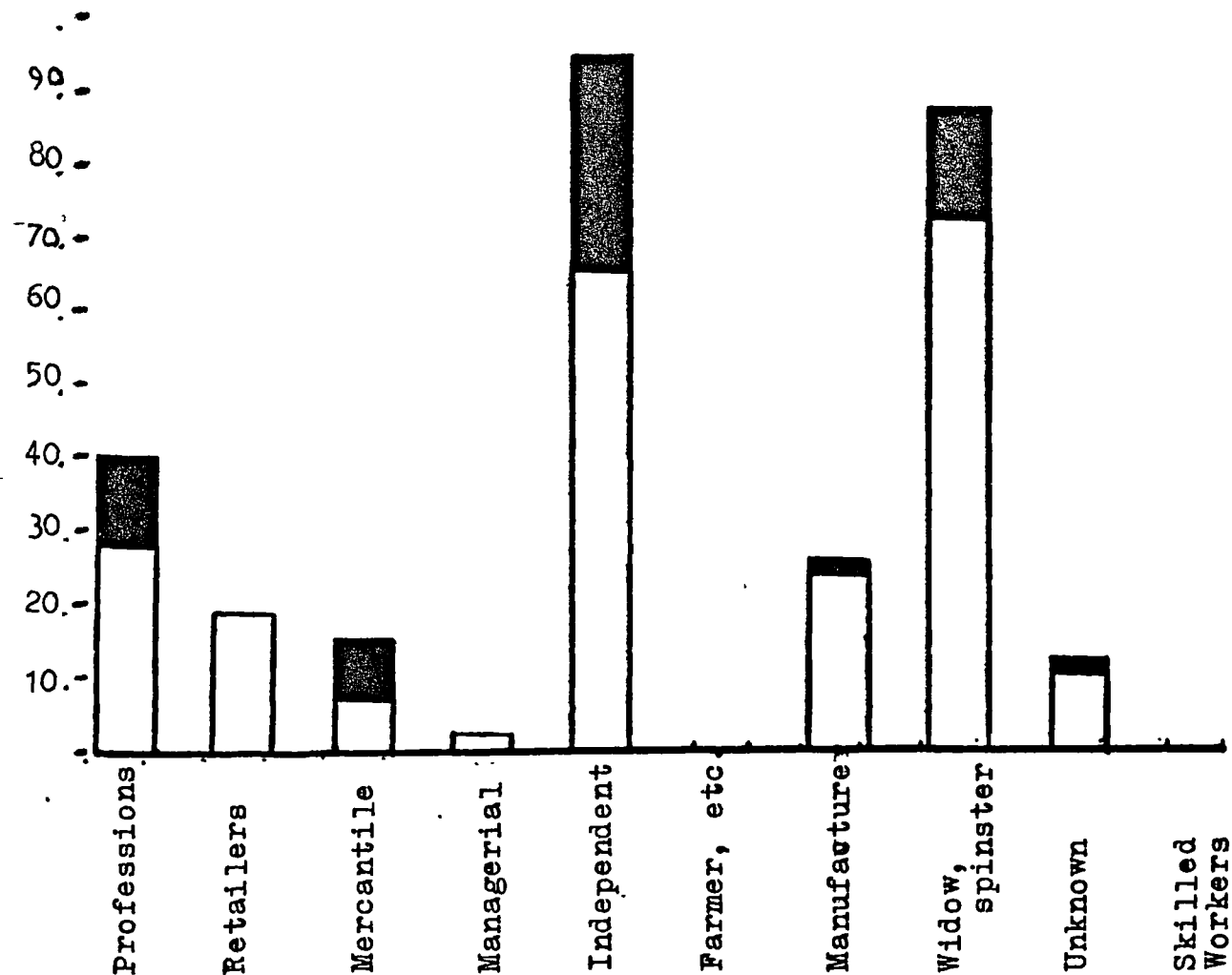
FIGURE THREE: PROBATE VALUATIONS BY OCCUPATION, 1821 - 70.

The figures refer to those leaving £5,000 or over; the shaded areas indicate the numbers leaving above £20,000.

(a) PORTSMOUTH



(b) SOUTHAMPTON



access to considerable resources, a fair number leaving over £20,000 on their death: 22% of wealth-holder professionals in Portsmouth, 18% in Southampton. These included army and naval officers, such as the Dockyard Commissioner Sir George Grey, who had married into the Whitbread family, and left a personal estate valued at £25,000. One imagines that many officers had an additional source of income, ranging from those who owned landed estates to the likes of Capt. Basil Hall R.N. writing pathetic and comic novels 'to the augmentation of my miserable half pay'; Hall left £10,000<sup>1</sup>. But there were wealthy civilians too: Richard Ring, a surgeon from the Hard, left a personal estate of £40,000, together with land at Portsea and Hambledon worth £2,000 per annum<sup>2</sup>. Closely allied to the professions in certain respects, the managerial stratum was distinctively a Portsmouth phenomenon, thanks to the Dockyard. There were only two 'managers' from Southampton, both of whom were master mariners, and therefore quite likely to have had some shares in the ships they were sailing. The Yard officers seem on occasions to have accumulated fairly sizeable sums: Peter Martin, a Master Ropemaker, left £30,000 on his death in 1832 (and named an Admiral as executor<sup>3</sup>), though this was a peak that no other Yard officer reached.

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<sup>1</sup>Letters of Charles Dickens, op.cit., vol.ii, 1969, p.174.

<sup>2</sup>Pigot's Commercial Directory, 1830; HT 27 May, 3 June 1865. Ring died c. 1850.

<sup>3</sup>P.R.O. PROB 8/225.

Neither town produced a stratum of wealthy manufacturers to compare with Oldham cotton masters or Tyneside shipbuilders in this period<sup>1</sup>. In Portsmouth, as has been shown, large scale industry was rare, and the £30,000 left by Thomas Jackson, the staymaker, may have been partly the result of Jackson's retailing activities. Even Richard Andrews, Southampton's leading coachmaker, employer of 200 men, left the not over-impressive sum of £10,000 - less than many officers in Portsmouth Dockyard<sup>2</sup>. The wealthier industrialists, moreover, tended to come from luxury trades, like a tobacconist who left £20,000. However, the possibility has to be considered that industrialists would have been more likely than many other social groups to hand over their business to a son or other near relative before their death. Moreover, one of the largest owners of industrial capital in the area - the Carter family - lived off the Island, in Petersfield<sup>3</sup>. There is, then, a strong possibility that industrialists are under-represented in these data, but even so Portsmouth had few manufacturers who could boast the economic standing of Lancashire's cotton masters<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Foster, op.cit., p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>Patterson, op.cit., vol. ii, 102-3.

<sup>3</sup>These comments obviously also apply to Rubinstein's findings.

<sup>4</sup>Rubinstein has well established that all provincial regions found their wealthy elites dwarfed by the London giants of finance and commerce; 'Wealth, Elites', passim.

In either town, many of the rich drew their income from buying and selling. Retailers tended to be slightly richer in Portsmouth than in Southampton, perhaps because of the rapid turnover of demand from transient soldiers or sailors; in both towns, retail provided roughly the same proportion of wealthy men. Merchants, on the other hand, were both more common and more wealthy in Southampton, where the influence of private trade through the port was greater. A number of them seem to have come from the West Indies.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the two towns lies less in the ways in which men made their money than in the amount held in the hands of their womenfolk. Rich single women formed a hefty wedge of rentier affluence in each town, but this was much more marked in Southampton. Here, 87 widows or spinsters left over £5,000, compared with Portsmouth's 41; even more striking, 15 of the Southampton women left over £20,000, but only three of the Portsmouth women. It seems unlikely that much of this wealth was engaged directly in economic activity; it was rather rentier in nature: holdings in the funds, in bank or perhaps railway shares, and so on<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>This unsuspected (by me) wad of female affluence is excluded by Foster's preoccupation with employers (a preoccupation which is entailed by Foster's attribution of a prior theoretical importance to the level of productive relations). Rubinstein says that there were no women millionairesses in the nineteenth century, and only sixteen half-millionairesses, whom he calls 'a substitute for a non-existent male heir': 'Men of Property: The Wealthy in Britain, 1809-1939', John Hopkins Univ. Ph.D, 1975, pp. 375-7. It was stated in mid-century that women (mostly widows and spinsters) made up 24% of the shareholders of the eight big London banks: Economist, 15 Mar. 1856.

If connected to the local economy at all, it would be either in the form of shareholdings, or in loans made through a banker or lawyer, or perhaps (though this is not measured in the probate) the renting of real estate. It is much more likely that these women were living upon dividends, and that they came to live in Southampton, not because it offered opportunities to make money but to spend it. Southampton did have a more genteel tone, some splendidly secluded suburbs, and could offer the comforts of urban life to those who wanted none of the smell, dirt and bustle of the industrial city.

In Portsmouth, the wealthiest category is that of professional men, including officers; some way behind come the single women, followed by independent gentlemen, then retailers, then industrialists. This 'pecking order' has to be treated, as has been suggested, with some reservation, since the probate valuations are likely to overstate the share of wealth held by those whose source of income required the least activity on their part<sup>1</sup>. Figures based upon the rating assessments do indeed suggest that retailing and industry have been underrepresented so far (see Figure Four). Many industrialists and retailers required sizeable premises, and sometimes other fixed capital such as steam engines (which were included in the rating assessment); it is, then,

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<sup>1</sup>Rubinstein is probably right to discount deliberate <sup>probate</sup> tax evasion at this time: 'Wealth, Elites....', p.101. This is not the case for income tax, however: of Thirteenth Report of the Board of Inland Revenue, cit., pp. 336-7.

possible that this source in turn over-states the wealth of such men. If this is the case, it remains true that the rating assessments measure a type of wealth not included in the probate valuations, providing a useful corrective.

The most costly premises were occupied by retailers, including drink-sellers. Thomas Dreweatt, of the Fountain Hotel, High Street, owned a house valued at £52.10s., and rented the hotel from Andrew Nance at £165 a year (he also owned smaller properties, excluded from the Figure, such as a further house in High St. (worth £45 yearly) and one (worth £21) leased to David Levy. Many of the industrialists were builders. Thomas Hall, a Southsea carpenter who employed 2 men, rented premises in Bath Sq. at £105. Benjamin Bramble, - another builder, owned his Southsea home (£85 yearly) and leased premises to another builder (Luke Camwell, who like Bramble had won government contracts<sup>1</sup>) at £52. 10s. Bramble, on his death in 1857, left £45,000. Industrialists, moreover, were among the most likely to own their own premises, along with merchants and persons of independent means.

The least likely to own their own premises were farmers. One exception to this rule was John Burrill, the Lord of the Manor; his own house and farm was rated at £100 per annum, and the tithes he owned were said to be worth £800 yearly; he also leased two farms, one at £198 15s. (owned jointly with

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 10 Jan. 1852.



Lord Powerscourt), and one at £60, as well as a host of lesser properties. Given the industrial environment, it would have been surprising if farming were not involved with other economic activities. It is absolutely impossible to categorize the Nance family. The father, Andrew senior, lived in Broad St. where he had retired after leaving the Fountain Hotel; he owned his own home (assessed at £49.10s) and two stores (£54, £90), four houses (£119 10s, £52 10s, £165, £36), a shop (£106 10s) and an assembly room (£75), and assorted smaller properties; on his death in 1853, Andrew Nance sr.'s will was assessed at £12,000. His son, Andrew junior (1811 - ? ), said to have been a champion coachman at one time, was assessed for £280 for his farm at Copnor, where 28 labourers were employed; he rented a further stretch of farmland at £107 5s, and carried on a business as railway carrier in Broad Street. He was the managing director of the Portsmouth Harbour Floating Bridge Co., to which he had lent £2,000; and had subscribed £2,500 worth of shares in the Portsmouth-Guildford-London railway, of which he was also a director<sup>1</sup>.

The omission of properties rated at under £50 affects the picture that I have so far drawn. Edward Cashier, a wine

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<sup>1</sup>Iron Times, 9 July 1845; Port of Portsmouth Floating Bridge Co., Directors' Reports, P.C.R.O. 49A 5/1/1, 27 Nov. 1844.

merchant, owned his own house in Fratton (£70); but he also owned six houses (at £60, £54, £45, £25 and £21), a beershop (£24) and a brewery (£42). On his death in 1852, he left £18,000. At least Cashier made it into Figure Four; the Tory banker John Elias Atkins did not, although he owned his own home, with stables (£45), two pubs (£24, £21), a hotel (£30) and two houses (£33 and £21).

So much for individual property. Portsmouth was also a town where institutional holdings bulked large. The banks owned their own buildings, the public utilities were assessed to a total of £1,700, the DockYard Coop Mill was valued at £201, and the railways at £297 10s. On top of this came the Carters' brewery, managed by Captain George Eveleigh. Eveleigh's residence in High St. (where he kept 6 maids and 2 men-servants) was assessed at £81 yearly, the two breweries at £337 10s (Penny St) and £361 10s (St. George's Sq.); offices and soon in Penny Street added another £64. 10s. Taking Portsmouth township alone, and considering only those houses worth over £20 yearly, the Pike, Spicer concern held 16 houses and one store. There were other properties, both through the rest of the Island and of a lesser value in Portsmouth township; in Portsea, for instance, there was an Inn (£51) and a Hotel (£57) as well as a multitude of pubs. The entire Pike Spicer holding in the town might have been worth £2,000 a year in rents<sup>1</sup>. Even this was dwarfed by

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<sup>1</sup>The total of their holdings, excluding all those in Old Portsmouth valued at less than £20 and all in Portsea at less than £50, came to £1,394.

the Crown's holdings on the Island<sup>1</sup>.

The rates paid are a very poor guide to the total value of the Crown's holdings, since until 1861 government property was not rated unless used for residential purposes, and even then the Crown set its own valuation upon the property concerned. According to the Telegraph of 9 February 1861, the agreed valuation was £37,791 10s in Portsea and £8,170 in Portsmouth township. In 1851, housing in the Yard included the names of the senior Yard officers, ranging from the Port Admiral's residence (£300 yearly) through the master shipwright's house (£60) to that of Captain Henry Chads of the Royal Naval College (£52 10s). Most splendid of all was the official residence of the Lieutenant Governor - in 1851, Lord Frederick Fitzclarence - which included a house with stables in High St (£300), grounds in Green Row and Penny St (£165 and £30).

The rate assessments, then, support the conclusions based upon probate valuations, while suggesting certain qualifications. The most important of these concerns the possible underestimation in probate data of those profitable economic activities which made most physical and verbal demands. I have not supplemented the study of Portsmouth's rates with one of Southampton's, for the reason that

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<sup>1</sup>Most of the Crown's holdings were not assessed; the exceptions seem to have been dwelling houses, and using the criteria in n.35 above the total came to £2,733 10s.

(apart from the question of time) there is no guarantee that the same assumptions underlay the process of assessment in the two towns. Perhaps some idea of the general differences between the two places can be gained by studying the aggregate assessments given in a Parliamentary Return of 1851<sup>1</sup>. (See Table One). These confirm our general impression that Southampton was a more affluent place than was Portsmouth;

TABLE ONE: RETURNS OF RATEABLE VALUES, 1851

	Portsmouth	Southampton
Under £5	3,115 (23%)	561 (9%)
£5 and under £10	6,856 (50%)	2,538 (39%)
£10 and over	3,493 (26%)	3,362 (52%)
Total	13,464	6,461

the returns also confirm what everybody knows about Victorian England: the majority of Portsmouth's population lived very differently from the minority of perhaps 200 families who occupied property rated at £50 or more.

The ratebooks probably understate the wealth of professional men, and in particular of the officers, both of the armed

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<sup>1</sup>Parl. Papers 1852, xlv, p.297.

forces and of the Yard. The social location of these salaried men is problematic: even if one decides to call their professional knowledge a type of 'capital', considering the investment that has gone into its acquisition, one is left with the awkward fact that this 'capital' is not heritable<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, so long as they were alive and at work, the incomes paid to high-ranking government employees could be considerable. In the 1820s the Commissioner of the Yard earned £1,100 per annum, and also had a free house and his naval half pay. The Master Attendant was paid £650 (reduced to £600 by the 1860s), as was the Master Shipwright; the two Assistant Master Shipwrights got £400 apiece, while the Second Master Attendant received £500. The Storekeeper, Engineer, and (until the post was abolished in 1830) Clerk of the Cheque all received £600<sup>2</sup>; the surgeon and chaplain both received £500 in the 'twenties, but by the 'sixties the surgeon's salary was set at between £450 and £500, while the poor old chaplain had been relegated to £350<sup>3</sup>. Sidney Pollard gives the following estimates of

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<sup>1</sup>Or if it is, this is only by the most indirect means. There is an enormous literature upon the place of professionals in the social division of labour, usefully discussed in T.J. Johnson, op.cit., and A. Hunt, 'Theory and Politics in the Identification of the Working Class', Class and Class Structure 1977, pp. 81-111. Parallel issues have been raised in the study of elite circulation among the East European bureaucracies.

<sup>2</sup>By the 1860s the Engineer's salary varied from £400-£650.

<sup>3</sup>Yard Salary Book, P.R.O. ADM 7/861; Parl. Papers 1863 xxxv, p.163.

managers' salaries during the early nineteenth century:

Top managers	£500 - £2,000	
'Typical managers'	£100 - 250	
Bookkeepers, cashiers, clerks, etc., with some supervisory powers	£ 50 - 100	1

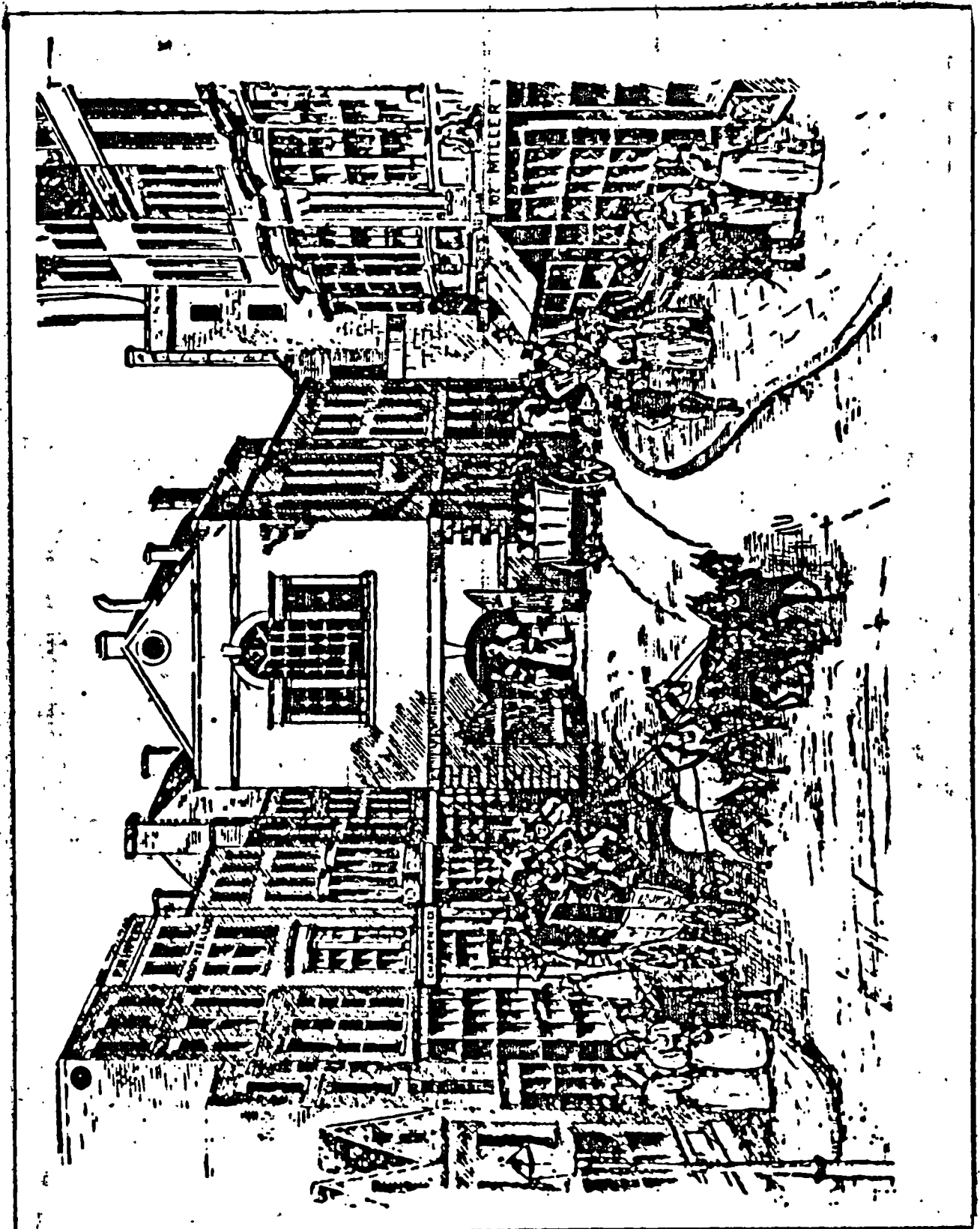
The Yard's top officers were thus among the best-paid managers in the country, and the probate figures suggest that they managed to save quite a considerable amount of their incomes. Moreover, they were guaranteed a salary (and a pension after retirement) whatever the state of trade; this cut them off from the economic experience of merchants, shopkeepers and manufacturers, the soundest of whom was haunted by uncertainty.

The flock of Army and Navy officers that grazed in the town were not so fortunate. From 1815, the long peace left the half-pay officers and unemployed midshipmen to live off their fat, many of them younger sons from rural families who could expect little comfort from their parents' homes. In 1815 66% of the Navy's officer cadre was out of a job; by 1818 the figure had reached 90%. Unemployment was highest among Admirals, for from the level of post-rank, promotion was tied to seniority, and the elevation of one

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<sup>1</sup>Pollard, Genesis of Modern Management, p. 171.

FIGURE FOUR: THE SOUTHERN END OF PORTSMOUTH HIGH STREET  
IN THE 1830s.



Source: P.C.R.O.

intelligent officer to a command required the collateral promotion of an inordinate number of incompetents; 93% of the Admirals were still unemployed in 1832, compared with 90% of post captains and 76% of lieutenants<sup>1</sup>. In the long term, the Admiralty tried to exercise more effective control over the intake of new officers, while promoting many of post-rank then placing them onto permanent half-pay. Under Baring, the Admiralty established a systematic method of retirement; yet even then, the proceedings had to be cautious and tactful: as Baring wrote in 1851,

If the House of Commons were alone concerned, I should not be afraid of obtaining from them liberal assistance to place the list on a wholesome footing without running counter to the prospects, and still more to the feelings, of a gallant profession 2.

Caution - induced, perhaps, in part by 1848 - was of course to give way in the aftermath of the Crimean war, but with little impact upon the half-pay system, since the bulk of mid-Victorian naval officers were full-time employees<sup>3</sup>. This did little to help the generation of officers who were unemployed in 1815, in particular midshipmen who were not entitled to half pay. The Admiralty in general seems to

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis op.cit., pp. 69, 73, 78, 87.

<sup>2</sup>Earl Northbrook (ed), Journals and Correspondence from 1808 to 1852 of Sir Francis Thornhill Baring, 1905 Winchester, p. 250.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, op.cit., ch. iii, p. 120.



have had a strong sense of obligation to these 'servants', promoting almost 1,800 midshipmen to the rank of lieutenant (and thus entitling them to half pay) between January and August 1815<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, it was happy to grant leave of absence to officers who requested it<sup>2</sup>.

It is relatively easy to examine the incomes of Naval officers, although they were of course subject to periodic revision. It can be seen that (Table Two) there was a steady rise in officers' salaries between 1815 and the 1860s, despite considerable differentiation within the cadre. Perhaps the fastest increase in pay came for the Engineers, whose salary rose from a maximum of £12 a month in the 1840s to between £6 8s 6d (minimum) for assistants and £3<sup>4</sup> 2s (maximum) for Inspectors by the sixties. The Engineers were a special case, a product of the mechanization of naval

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 7 Aug. 1815. The Admiralty had as well a sense of the limits to their obligation: the HT of 21 Aug. 1815 reported that orders had been given for the discharge of all midshipmen and masters' mates upon their ships entering the Ordinary.

<sup>2</sup>The successful applicants for leave of absence (which could be of up to a year in duration) included a lieutenant of Marines from Portsmouth, who wished to take a course of treatment for venereal disease: Letter of 1 Mar. 1816, Portsmouth Station R.M., Letters to Admiralty, P.R.O. ADM 1/3298. For orders re leave of absence see HT 21 Aug. 1815.

TABLE TWO: ANNUAL SALARIES OF NAVY OFFICERS, AS SET IN  
1815 AND 1862

	1815	1862
1) Flag Officers		
Admiral of the Fleet	£1,680	£2,232
Admiral	£1,176	£1,860
Vice Admiral	£840	£1,488
Rear Admiral	£588	£1,116
2) Some Executive Officers		
Captain	£386 to £201	£715 to £459
Commander	£201	£307
Master	£151 to £88	£214 to £186
3) Some Civilian Officers		
Chaplain	£138	£298 to £186
Surgeon	£302 to £168	£465 to £279
Schoolmaster	£24 to £27*	£130 to £186**
Engineer (Inspector of Machinery)	-	£372 to £409***

\* Plus £5 per annum per pupil.

\*\* Plus £10 4s per annum per pupil.

\*\*\* Plus 50% of pay extra in tropics while steam is up.

Source: M.A. Lewis, op.cit., pp. 212-3.

warfare. The basic income differentiation appears to come at the point of promotion to flag rank: particularly after a rise granted to Rear Admirals in 1824, Admirals are clearly demarcated from the subordinate officers. This also differentiated the naval officers from the Yard officers: heads of department in the Dockyard could only rise beyond their £600 salary by winning promotion completely out of the Yards, and into the Admiralty offices themselves. Yet Yard salaries compared respectably with those of active captains; and unlike the captains, Yard officers did not face months or even years of half-pay.

The last set of evidence about individual wealth that I want to examine consists of lists of shareholders. Unfortunately, the bulk comes from records of bankrupt companies, and the very fact of their dissolution may make them atypical<sup>1</sup>. The three bankrupt companies to be considered are: the Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport and Isle of Wight Iron Steam Boat and Portsmouth Harbour Pier Company, registered in 1845, for which there is only the Provisional list of Directors<sup>2</sup>; the Portsmouth, Portsea and Isle of Wight Steam Packet Company, registered in 1849 and wound up in 1852<sup>3</sup> and the Portsea Island Conveyance Company, registered in February 1857<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Perhaps it does not; the question is still an open one.

<sup>2</sup>P.R.O. BT 41/572/3128.

<sup>3</sup>P.R.O. BT 41/571/3120.

<sup>4</sup>P.R.O. BT 41/571/3119.

One successful company will also be considered: the Port of Portsmouth Floating Bridge Company, formed in 1838 to provide transport across the Harbour mouth<sup>1</sup>. Thirdly, I want to examine railway shareholders in 1845<sup>2</sup>. Lastly, I shall look at the 1851 investors in a successfully operating enterprise that fifteen years later did go broke, the Portsmouth, Portsea, Gosport and South Hampshire Bank<sup>3</sup>. None of these concerns, except perhaps the bank, is particularly typical of the local economy: they are transport firms, which were (because of economies of scale) prone to joint-stock organisation.

First, it is best to examine the local shareholders in the railway networks, since despite the regional location of railroads themselves, capital markets were more or less national<sup>4</sup>. The analysis is simple enough, given the small size of the group under consideration (Table Three). What is evident here is the clear preference of the mercantile group for this type of investment (and, by inference, its

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<sup>1</sup>Records in P.C.R.O., 49A 1/1/1, and 49A 5/1/1.

<sup>2</sup>Parl. Papers, 1845 xl, passim.

<sup>3</sup>HT, 15 Feb. 1851, 8 Apr. 1865.

<sup>4</sup>Railway share promotions are discussed in J.R. Killick, W.A. Thomas, 'The Provincial Stock Exchanges, 1830-1870', Economic Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., 1970, xxiii, pp. 97-103; M.C. Reed, 'Railways and the Growth of the Capital Market', in (ed.) Railways and the Victorian Economy, Newton Abbot, 1969, pp. 162-83.

possession of resources free to be invested thus).

TABLE THREE: DISTRIBUTION OF DECLARED OCCUPATIONS OF RAILWAY  
CONTRACT SUBSCRIBERS, 1845.

	Portsmouth Inhabitants	Southampton Inhabitants	England & Wales*
Gent., Esq.	10%	38%	26%
Commerce	29%	18%	21%
Professions	34	18	20
Manufacturers	10	6	12
Retailers	10	3	10
Females	5	12	7
Agriculture	2	0	2
Transport	0	6	1
Total:	100	100	100
N=	41	34	448

\*England and Wales: the figures are based on a 10% sample of inhabitants of England and Wales subscribing to the railway contracts of 1845.

Source: Parl. Papers 1845, xl.

Even more marked is the tendency of professional men to regard railways as a suitable area for investment; this is less simply explained than is the preference of merchants (who obviously benefitted from closer links with other areas), and may be largely due to the difficulty for professional men of finding any 'indigenous' outlets for surplus funds:

you could not really invest them in your own business. Moreover, the professions in Portsmouth, and in Southampton the merchants, were most likely to subscribe larger sums (two of the 14 professionals in Portsmouth and three of the six Southampton merchants subscribed for shares of £5,000 or more). While bankers were relatively unimportant in Portsmouth, and entirely absent in Southampton, this is likely to reflect investment priorities rather than their wealth<sup>1</sup>. Some familiar figures are to be found among the railway investors, such as the draper and staymaker Thomas Jackson, who was prepared to risk £12,500 in the London to Portsmouth Direct Line<sup>2</sup>. Since the professionals included officers, it is not surprising that their investments were not necessarily in railways that offered local services: James Henderson,

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<sup>1</sup>S.A. Broadbridge has shown that while bankers were rarely prominent investors in railways, they were prepared to make substantial loans on mortgages: 'The sources of railway share capital', in M.C. Reed (ed.), op.cit., p. 203.

<sup>2</sup>The L.S.W.R. had connected Gosport with its Southampton terminus in 1842, but anyone with an eye for the fast penny could have seen that the opening of the Southampton terminus (the line was built 1835-40) meant more trade passing via Gosport. The L.S.W.R. connected with Portsmouth via Fareham in 1848; a route to London via Brighton had opened in 1847, and in 1859 the direct London to Portsmouth line started to run. See Temple Patterson, op.cit., vol. 1, ch. xi; E. Course, 'Portsmouth Railways', Portsmouth Papers vi, 1969, p. 4.

the Dockyard surgeon, for instance, had salted away £900 in extensions to the London, Worcester and South Staffs railway. J.R. Tate had £4,600 invested in nine companies, including the Dundalk and Enniskillen, the South Wales, the Staines and Richmond, and the London to Portsmouth Direct Line; he was a Purser in the Navy. The Southampton investors tended to look further westwards than did those from Portsmouth: Col. George Henderson, for instance, a promoter of the L.S.W.R., decided in 1845 to put £40,000 into the Southampton to Dorchester line. There was something of a Lancashire connection in Southampton: William Betts, a building and transport contractor, had shares in the Chester, Manchester & Liverpool Junction, as well as the North Wales Mineral line. Joseph Lancaster, the ironfounder, and George Laishley, a draper, held their shares in the line that was to connect Portsmouth with London via Chichester<sup>1</sup>.

The railway share subscribers, then, seem to have been partly merchants hoping to improve communications, partly professionals looking for a good investment; no doubt there were also 'local patriots' who felt that their town ought not to be without a railway. The three bankrupt firms, unlike the

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<sup>1</sup>For Col. Henderson, William Betts, Joseph Lancaster and George Laishley, see Temple Patterson, op.cit., Vol.2; this also discusses the Lancashire connection; it is Professor Temple Patterson's judgement that the L.S.W.R. was crucial for Southampton's economic future in turning 'local businessmen away from the former economic interest which many of them had in Portsmouth and its dockyard to London and its needs as the source of their future wealth': op.cit., vol. 1, p. 171.

railways, were primarily local firms, drawing largely upon the local capital market, but with significant 'outside' links. The Portsmouth Harbour Pier Co. does not seem to have got much further than the formation of a provisional Committee, and was promoted originally by one James T. Kirkwood, a Wharfinger of Fishmongers' Hall Wharf, London. The Conveyance Company did operate for some time, carrying goods and passengers within a radius of seven miles of Portsea Island<sup>1</sup>. By 30 June 1859, 495 of the 500 shares had been taken up and a stock of £930 received from the 92 shareholders (all but four of whom lived on the Island; the others were from Cosham, Hambledon and Waterlooville). The Steam Packet Co. was far the largest of the bankrupt firms: promoted by a family of Tory lawyers (Henry and Richard Ford), it had a proposed capital of £7,500; it ceased operation in February 1852, the Royal Mail company having agreed to take over its functions<sup>2</sup>.

The shareholders in the Steam Packet Co. were overwhelmingly retailers, with support from industrialists and professionals. The largest holdings were in the hands of a fairly small group of men: Joseph White, a Cowes shipbuilder (with 50 shares), Edmund Stokes, a Southsea wine merchant (40 shares), J.W. White, a 'Gentleman' of North End (40), and Stephen Gaselee, a London barrister with family landholdings and

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<sup>1</sup>It made a loss of £45 in the first six months of 1860: HT, 25 Aug. 1860.

<sup>2</sup>The steam Packet Co. lost £1,113 in the first six months of its operation.



TABLE FOUR: DISTRIBUTION OF OCCUPATIONS OF SHAREHOLDERS IN  
BANKRUPT COMPANIES

	Steam Packet Co., Holdings of 10 or more shares, 1850	Portsea Island Conveyance Co., all holders, 1859
Retailers	42%	37%
Industrialists	21	28
Professionals	23	12
Gent., etc.	2	15
Commerce	10	1
Females	0	2
Agriculture	2	4
Not known	0	1
Total	100	100
N=	48	93

political ambitions on Portsea Island (40 shares). Much of the Company's support was drawn from the Isle of Wight, including six members of the Board of Directors. The Conveyance Company, however, was overwhelmingly a Portsmouth affair; the only 'outsider' among the Directors was Edward Frost, a private school owner of Waterlooville who had been born at Portsea and worked on the Island until the 1850s. Promoted by traders and small manufacturers from Portsea and Southsea, the Conveyance Company's ownership was strongly concentrated: over half of the shares were in blocks of 10 or more, owned by twentyone of the ninetythree

shareholders. They included John Oakshott, a brewer and shipping surveyor whose Commercial Road premises were rated at £178 10s and who also owned two pubs; Mark E. Frost, who owned the Baltic Wharf in the Camber; Samuel Cavendar, a Portsea Tobacconist; Edwin Galt, a Southsea wine merchant whose family were master tailors in Portsmouth High Street; Thomas Ellis Owen and Lord George Lennox, prominent members of the Southsea elite, were also involved.

There was a degree of overlap in the liquidated companies' membership. The Provisional Committee of the Harbour Pier Co. included Henry Ford, a promoter of the Steam Packet Co., and shareholder in the Conveyance Co. Erasmus Jackson, a banker and the Borough Chamberlain (worth £7,000 on his death in 1862, not including valuable real estate), was another member of the Pier Co's Committee with an interest in the Conveyance Co. James William White, already mentioned as a shareholder in the Steam Packet Co., was on the Harbour Pier Co. Committee - as were Emanuel Emanuel, who had an interest in the Steam Packet Co., and the Tory solicitor, Archibald Low.

It is, then, possible to infer from the records of the three bankrupt companies that a small group of local business-men were extremely active in speculative ventures. This was not so true of the Floating Bridge Company, however, which throughout this period relied heavily on outside capital. From the outset the Bridge had some sort of connection with the L.S.W.R., which in 1842 opened a branch line from

Southampton down to Gosport; the initiative might have been taken by Gosport and Southampton men, anxious to draw trade away from Portsmouth as well as to attract trade with it.

TABLE FIVE: DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDENCE OF SHAREHOLDERS IN PORT OF PORTSMOUTH FLOATING BRIDGE COMPANY, 1845 AND 1866.

	1845	1866
	%	%
Portsmouth & Gosport	52.4	30.7
London	28.5	20.7
Southampton	10.8	41.8
Other	8.3	6.8

Source: Annual Reports, 28 Nov. 1845, 4 Nov. 1866, P.C.R.O. 49A 5/1/1.

The largest initial shareholders included Daniel Quarrier (a retired surgeon of Marines from Gosport), a London civil engineer (who may have received the shares in part payment for his work on the Bridge), and William Betts, the Southampton contractor (see p. 148). Connections with the L.S.W.R. included Colonel Henderson (see p.148) and a Hampstead-based Director of the Railway firm, Sir John Easthope, M.P. Nonetheless, although the rationale for the L.S.W.R. link had gone by the 1860s, ownership of the Bridge by Southampton capital had become more, not less marked. William Betts by

now owned almost one third of the shares; Andrew Nance (see below) held another tenth of the total. The extent of the shift is indeed greater than is apparent from Table Five, since the Bridge was heavily dependent upon local loans in the forties<sup>1</sup>; by the fifties it had shrugged these off, turning a steady dividend of five per cent in the sixties. Thus the Floating Bridge, a profitable concern, was certainly not dominated by local businessmen, but had been 'colonized' (if that is not too dramatic a word) by Southampton capital.

Nevertheless, there were a few familiar names among the Floating Bridge's owners, such as Andrew Nance, James and Henry Hollingsworth (printers and the owners of Kings' Rooms in Southsea), or John Deverell of Purbrook Park. The familiar names become absolutely intimate when we turn to the Esplanade Pier Co., established in the late fifties to provide a profitable amenity for the growing residential and holiday trade of Southsea. There were in 1871 five directors. These were:

Emanuel Emanuel, chairman, goldsmith, building developer, member of the Town Council, property owner with rental of £328. Cttee of Steam Packet Co. Born London, 1808.

Andrew Nance, Town Councillor, Director of Landport & Southsea Tram Co., Managing Director of Floating Bridge, property owner with gross rental of £990 in 1873, railway shareholder. Father left £12,000. Born Portsmouth 1811.

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<sup>1</sup>In 1844 the Bridge Co. owed £6,100 to the contractors; £8,700 to Jane Austen's brother, Admiral Sir Francis; £2,000 to Nance; and £1,070 to Quarrier: Report, 27 Nov. 1844, P.C.R.O. 49A 5/1/1.

William Grant Chambers, Tea Dealer and Grocer, Chairman of Landport and Southsea Tram Co., Director of Portsmouth Floating Bridge Co., landowner with rental of £345 in 1873, Committee of Steam Packet Co. Town Councillor. Born Portsmouth, 1810.

George Sheppard, Master shoemaker, Town Councillor, Chairman of Portsmouth Improvement Commission. Born Fordingbridge 1815.

Edward Kent Parsons, Gentleman, born in Calcutta 1822, Director of Landport and Southsea Tram Co., Director of Southsea Pier Hotel Co., Director of Floating Bridge Co., President of Portsmouth Liberal Association.

This is one kind of economic elite, clearly: men in their sixties or late fifties; fingers close to the economic pulse of the town, making enemies as fast as they made money.

Lastly, a brief look at the patterns of shareholding in the South Hants. Bank. It was one of three local banks, the other two being partnerships of long standing (Grant, Gillman and Longs, and John Elias Atkins and Son). It is hard to tell which was the largest in terms of volume of trade; Grant & Co.'s was the longest-established, emerging into the limelight after the collapse of Godwin's bank in 1819; within a year, the family had given up its original merchanting business to concentrate entirely upon banking<sup>1</sup>. By the 1850s Grant & Co.'s had three partners (William Grant, George Gillman and

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 1 Mar. 1819, 21 Feb., 14 Aug. 1820.

George Long<sup>1</sup>), with branches in Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport. Atkins' bank was a smaller affair, with one branch in Portsmouth township, formed when John Atkins (1760-1837) extended that part of his merchanting business which was concerned with the purchase and sale of Government securities and so on, entering the discount trade<sup>2</sup>; it was later taken over by the Southampton-based Hants. Banking Co., and the premises were turned into a naval officers' club. There were also two branches of the National Provincial (one in Portsea, one in Landport) and a branch of the Bank of England in Portsmouth township<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>William Grant, 1800-67, born Portsmouth, J.P., nephew of William Grant (1761-1844) who founded the firm and left £10,000 on his death.  
George Gillman, 1804 - ? , b. London, J.P.  
George Long, 1821 - ? , b. Southampton, shareholder in Floating Bridge.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 23 Nov. 1818.  
John Elias Atkins Sr. (1787 - ?), J.P., b. Portsmouth, subscriber to the Portsmouth-London direct railway; Father had left £6,000.  
John Elias Atkins Jr. (1815 - ?), b. Portsmouth, subscriber to the Portsmouth-London railway.  
The origins of bankers from among wholesale traders, collectors of government revenue, and the legal profession, are well established: see L.S. Pressnell, Country Banking in the Industrial Revolution, Oxford 1956, ch.iii; L.H. Grindon, Manchester Banks and Bankers: Historical, Biographical and Anecdotal, Manchester 1877, pp. 27, 34, 44, 71, 87, 113, 121; B.L. Anderson & P. Cotrell, 'Another Victorian Capital Market: A Study of Banking and Bank Investors on Merseyside', Econ. Hist. Rev. 2nd ser., 1975, xxviii, p. 604; J.M. Hunter, 'Sources of Capital in the Industrial Development of Nottingham', East Midlands Geographer xvi, 1961, pp. 34-42.

<sup>3</sup>White, History, Gazetteer and Directory, op.cit., p. 266. The Bank of England branch opened in 1834, chiefly to cater for the government departments: HT, 5 May 1834. The building that housed Atkins' bank, still standing in Pembroke Road, was actually used only to form the north-western part of the present club-building; the club house opened on 1 Jan. 1869. News, 16 Nov. 1977.

The South Hants Bank had been formed by three partners, who went for joint-stock organization in 1839<sup>1</sup>. The partners were Erasmus Jackson, a congregationalist linen draper from High Street, and a relative of Thomas, the staymaker; C.J. Hector; and William McLorg . Of the fifty shareholders in 1851, all but seven lived on Portsea Island or in Gosport; those who lived elsewhere came mainly from London (three men, including David Brent Price, the veteran Portsmouth radical), elsewhere in Hampshire (one from Petersfield, one from Titchfield) or Wiltshire (one from

TABLE SIX: DECLARED OCCUPATIONS OF SHAREHOLDERS IN THE SOUTH  
HAMPSHIRE BANKING COMPANY, 1851

	%
Retailers	30
Industrialists	18
Professionals	10
Gent., etc.	16
Commerce	20
Farmer	2
Transport	4

Source: Hants Telegraph, 15 Feb. 1851.

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 22 Apr. 1839. Joint stock banks outside a radius of 65 miles from London had been legalized in 1826; within the Bank of England's monopoly area, only non-issuing banks were permitted, and that from 1833. 1836-8 apparently saw a steady growth of provincial joint-stock banking. P. Mathias, The First Industrial Nation, 1969, 350-1.

Damerham, one from Winton). Most of the holders were locals<sup>1</sup>. All were men, and this seems to have been unusual<sup>2</sup>. Thirdly, the South Hants Bank seems to have been overwhelmingly a tradesmen's affair. Indeed, it was predominantly owned by the drapery interest: not only had Erasmus Jackson himself been a draper, but nine of the other investors were still in the trade. A number were also, like Jackson, Trustees of the Congregationalist Chapel in King St., and it seems therefore probable that Jackson had used his business and religious connections to draw capital into the bank. Lastly, although the Gosport interest in the bank was not negligible (it included, for example, the Compignes, great Liberal lawyers, and the brewer James Biden), only five investors came from across the Harbour, but thirtyeight from Portsea Island.

Apart from retailers, the largest group of investors in the bank came from commerce (including three described as 'bankers'). However, the merchants involved were men with considerable economic sway in the town's life. Peter White, a leather merchant with his own curing business, left £10,000 when he died at Waterlooville in 1869. William P. Helby, of Queen Street, was one of the town's largest stay factors;

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<sup>1</sup>The source is the compulsorily published list of partners in the HT, 15 Feb. 1851; unfortunately it does not give the size of the holdings.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Economist, 15 Mar. 1856; Anderson and Cottrell, op.cit., p. 611.



William Ray, a timber merchant and shipowner, was involved in the Patent Waterproof Glue Company of 1861 and owned property in Landport. The manufacturers who held shares in the Bank were a much more heterogeneous group, ranging from the Doudney brothers (owners of a large and smelly tallow factory at Mile End) to Thomas Luke of Grigg Street, Southsea, a 'common brewer' with a small pawnbrokers' business on the side (Luke's neighbours were a carpenter to one side, a dockyard sailmaker to the other).<sup>1</sup> Lastly, a small group of professional men held shares in the Bank; perhaps it is needless to say that these included Thomas Ellis Owen.

The sources discussed so far enable us to identify the main types of wealth to be found in Portsmouth, and to give some idea of who owned this property. Portsmouth did not possess a resident aristocratic landowner. By the time of the 1873 'census' of landowners, when Southsea had started to attract a resident 'gentry' to the town, there were only two large landowners in the town: the Admiralty (with holdings valued at £28,798 per annum) and the Gas Company (whose holdings were reckoned at £5,019). Figure Four (b) implies that the

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<sup>1</sup>Pressnell (op.cit., p.51) mentions that drapers were frequently found among the early country bankers. The occupations of investors in some Merseyside banks are discussed in Anderson and Cottrell, op.cit., pp.608-13. 'Merchants', closely followed by retailers, were normally the largest investors in these banks; females, interestingly, are shown to be willing investors in firms of proven stability and new firms alike.

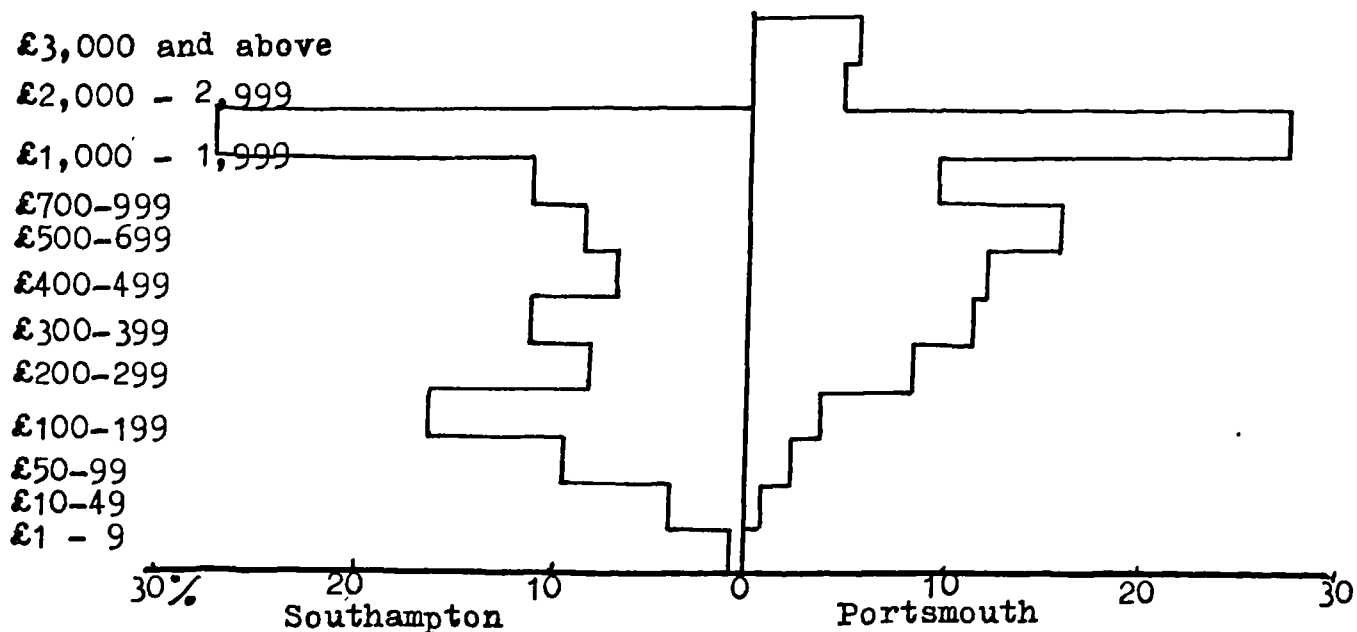
number of wealthy landowners was probably as great, if not greater, in Portsmouth as in Southampton (proportionately speaking). But a comparison of Figures Four (a) and (b) does indicate that the concentration of landed wealth was more accentuated in Southampton than in Portsmouth: in both towns, holdings worth more than £1,000 per annum made up roughly one quarter of the total landed property, yet whereas only six persons had holdings of such a size in Southampton, eighteen held them in Portsmouth (not counting institutions). While Portsmouth did not possess a resident aristocracy or other large local landowner (apart from the Admiralty), who could in some towns dictate the speed, nature and extent of urban change<sup>1</sup> (economic, residential and political), there were a number of wealthy landowners, some of whom were brewers, others of whom lived in the town but probably owned land elsewhere. The Island itself remained predominantly a place of small-holdings, with an unusually

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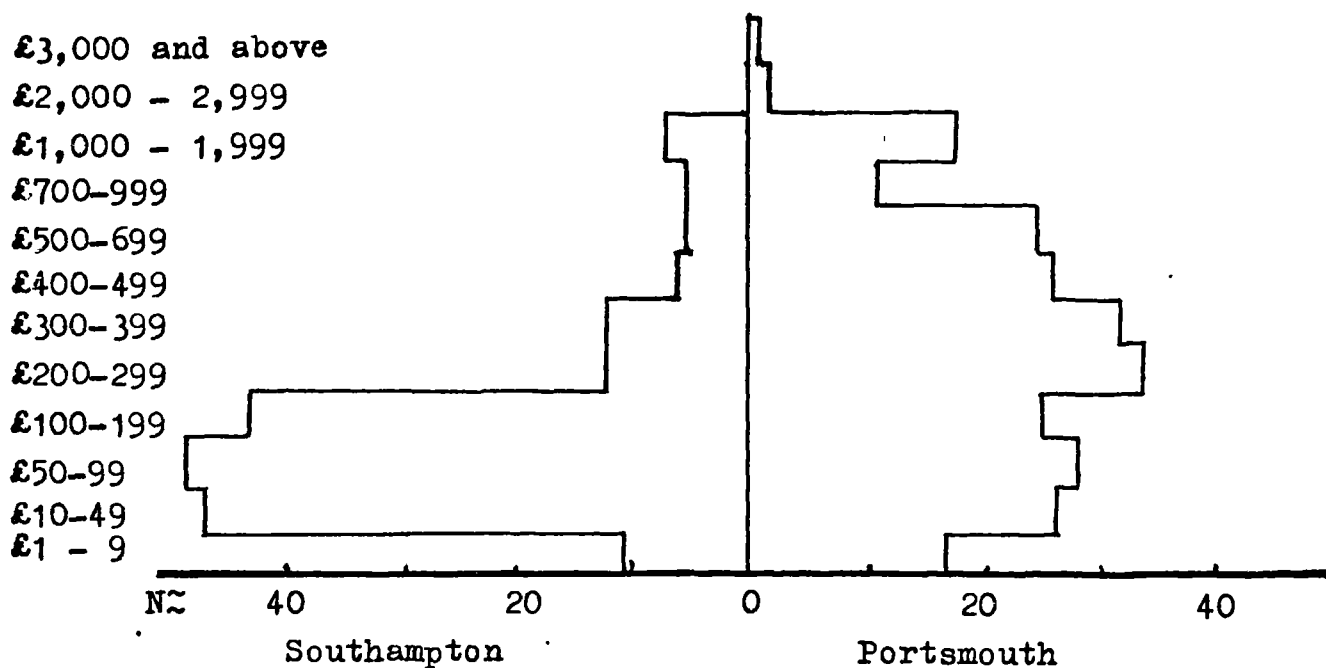
<sup>1</sup>Aristocratic enterprise, landholding and political influence is the subject of an enormous literature. The spatial and economic implications are well brought out in M.J. Daunton, 'Suburban Development in Cardiff: Grangetown and the Windsor Estate, 1857-75', Morgannwg, xvi 1972, 53-66; G. Rowley, 'Landownership in the spatial growth of towns: A Sheffield example', East Midlands Geographer vi, 1975. Other aspects of the literature have been summarized in D. Cannadine, 'From "Feudal" Lords to Figureheads: Urban landownership and aristocratic influence in nineteenth century cities', Urban History Yearbook 1978, pp. 23-35.

FIGURE FOUR: LANDOWNERSHIP, 1872 - 73.

(a) Value of Holdings of Certain Sizes, as a Share of Total Values.



(b) Number of Landowners by Annual Value of Holding



Source: Returns of Owners of Land, Parl. Papers 1874 lxxxix, Pt II, pp. 237 - 77.

high rate of owner-occupation<sup>1</sup>.

We can, then, glimpse the peaks of wealth-holding, and below them we can imagine the bed-rock upon which the peaks were founded. One peak is the extent of female wealth; this shows up largely in the probate valuations, reflecting the way that probate data highlight certain kinds of rather immobile wealth such as company shares, government or East India stocks, and so on. Another peak is apparent among retailers, especially among those (such as certain luxury trades like goldsmiths, or clothing trades like tailors and drapers) who also employed a handful of workers to produce individualized commodities, often for an individual buyer and sometimes for government contracts. Perhaps Emanuel Emanuel epitomizes this type of affluent trader, whose customers included the Royal Yacht, individual officers, and the Duke of Richmond, for whom Emanuel made the Goodwood Cup in 1859<sup>2</sup>. Third came the merchants and bankers, less prominent in Portsmouth than in a large commercial city like London, or even Southampton, but still not negligible; often

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. S.C. on Town Holdings 1887 xiii, App. II, pp. 694-5 (a reference I owe to Sandra Taylor); for the earlier period, when dockyard workers were frequent builders of their own houses, see C. Chalklin, The Provincial Towns of Georgian England: A study of the building process 1740-1820, 1974, pp. 124-8. One would like to know more about the intervening period.

<sup>2</sup>HT, 25 June 1859.

they controlled some types of industrial activity by virtue of loans or factorial relations with manufacture. There were few rich industrialists, partly because Portsmouth's industrial structure was characteristically small-scale, working on sub-contracts, subject to seasonal or cyclical depressions; partly because, as elsewhere, it stood in a relation of dependency with the commercial group. Most wealthy industrialists were brewers or builders, with the occasional staymaker thrown in. Lastly there were the professional men, ranging from officers in the Yard or armed forces to the surgeons and lawyers of the town. Although the civilian professionals quite often engaged in local businesses as shareholders, this was less true of the Yard and services officers. Only one officer (Thomas Eastman, a Naval instructor) held a share in any other Company than the Floating Bridge; he held ten in the Conveyance Company (which also had 3 women among its investors). The Floating Bridge, promoted by a Surgeon of Marines, did attract a few officers, including Admiral Austen; but it did not win support from the Yard officers.

Portsmouth's bourgeoisie did include men of wealth, and not a few wealthy women; but this might not have been apparent to the contemporary observer. The opinions of the Municipal Corporations Commissioners have already been cited (above, p.89); in 1915 the Vicar of Portsea repeated the view that, Southsea or no Southsea, 'Extremes of wealth and poverty are

both absent; there are very few rich inhabitants; on the other hand, absolute penury is rare'<sup>1</sup>. There were two reasons for the prevalence of this opinion. First, the local social structure misted up the visibility of extreme wealth: money went up to Petersfield, to be enjoyed by the Bonham Carters who owned the pubs and breweries; some went to London, to the owners of the great clothing houses. Much of the wealth which was accumulated by local men came from salaries paid by the Admiralty, or from the fees paid to professional men; in turn it was invested in government funds or similar outlets. Other wealthy inhabitants had made their wealth from 'buying and selling': the merchants and retailers. Lastly, there were the women who had probably been left their stocks and shares (or cash which they promptly invested in stocks and shares) by a near relative, probably a father or a son. Very rarely did this wealth arise from an obviously exploitative relationship - one that was immediately visible and experienced as such - as did, say, the wealth of Lancashire cotton masters or Yorkshire coal owners<sup>2</sup>.

The second reason for the widespread belief in Portsmouth's egalitarianism was the fact that, compared with the extremes to be found in some other towns, it was egalitarian. By and large, Portsmouth was not a rich community in comparison with

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<sup>1</sup>C.f. Garbett, The Work of a Great Parish, 1915, p.34.

<sup>2</sup>The social visibility of the upper strata is discussed in A. Campbell, Ph.D. thesis 1977, ch.vi; Foster op.cit., ch. vi; G.J. Crossick, Ph.D. 1975, ch. vi; M.J. Daunton, 'La crescita della societa classista', Quaderni Storici, 29/30 1975, pp.715-6.

Southampton, as we have seen. Figure Five demonstrates that it paid less income tax per capita than many of the northern Cotton towns, even accepting that the incomes of the Yard and armed forces were taxed in London and not locally (incomes under £150 were exempt, so we are effectively considering the bourgeoisie). Portsmouth's per capita taxation was £0.14; this compared with £0.42 for Bristol, £0.20 for Plymouth, £0.30 for Hull and £0.26 for Southampton. For a port town, it was lacking in a stratum of prosperous inhabitants, and this undoubtedly affected the options open to the Town Council, to local charities, to local businessmen. People were aware of this: a local Guardian, for instance, contrasted Portsmouth with Plymouth, which did have 'a large portion of the affluent class' and was therefore better placed to bear the burden of the rates<sup>1</sup>. As we have seen, many of the town's citizens did possess a 'competence' (a revealing word in itself); but they were not rich, at least in comparison with Manchester, Birmingham, or above all London<sup>2</sup>.

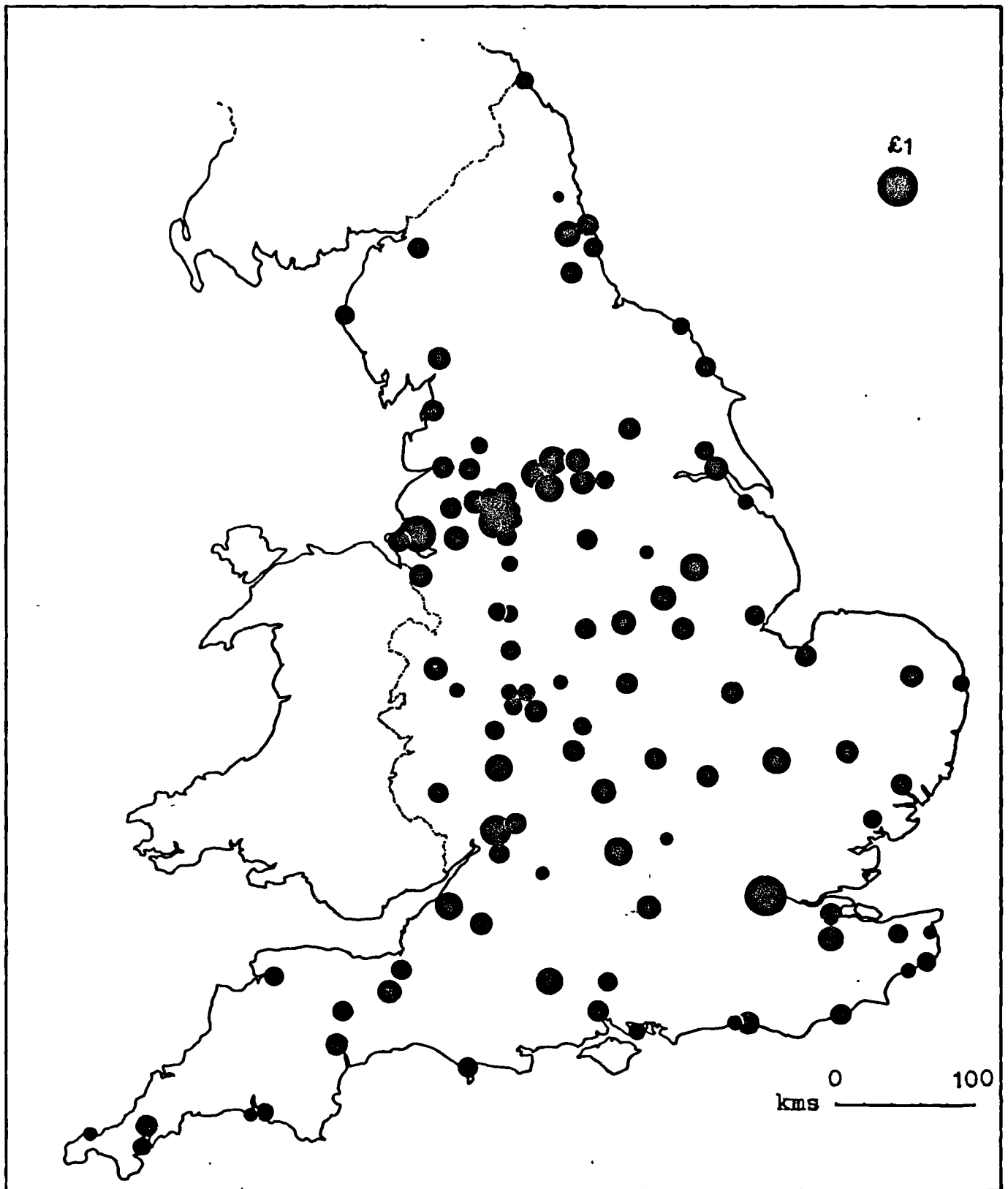
The peculiar social structure of the Portsmouth bourgeoisie affected its relations with other classes in a number of ways. Quite conceivably, the 'invisibility' of local wealthy elites, and in particular the indirectness of the exploitative relation (which might well have stretched as

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 16 Dec. 1865.

<sup>2</sup>C.f. Rubinstein, op.cit.

FIGURE SIX: INCOME TAX PAID PER CAPITA BY ENGLISH BOROUGHES,  
1862 .





far afield as Argentina or India), helped to weaken the Portsmouth labour movement. It is also likely to have affected the way that the elites perceived themselves and their social world. One can identify three types of wealth in Portsmouth: 'indigenous' wealth, based upon exploitation of local resources, was weak, generally exploiting working men as consumers, working women as producers; 'rentier', with few or no local connections; and 'professional', largely derived from employment in one or another government departments. A local aristocratic landowner might have been a hefty local wealth-holder, on the whole absent from Portsmouth. How people interpreted these divisions in the context of the local social structure forms part of the next chapter, which goes on to examine the extent to which the different wealthy elites perceived themselves and one another and how they handled these relations through cultural forms.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIAL POSITIONS AND STYLES OF LIFE

The relationship between economic position and social status is a vexed question, further complicated for the nineteenth century by the colossal effects of economic transformation upon social structure. The most thoughtful student of prestige and status, Max Weber, particularly stressed this complexity:

Property as such is not always recognized as a status qualification, but in the long run it is, and with extraordinary regularity .... But status honour need not necessarily be linked with a 'class situation'. On the contrary, it normally stands in sharp opposition to the pretensions of sheer property <sup>1</sup>.

Historians have paid some attention to the way that the 'rise of the middle classes' was expressed and consolidated by opulent life styles. Portsmouth, with its mass of small

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<sup>1</sup>H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, 1974, pp. 181, 187 and 191: "The decisive role of a "style of life" in status "honour" means that status groups are the specific bearers of all conventions.... all "stylization" of life either originates in status groups or is at least conserved by them'. Cf. N.D. Jewson, 'Medical knowledge and the patronage system in Eighteenth Century England', Sociology viii, 1974, pp.469-85.

businesses and its great state industries, could not offer any competition with such towns as Sheffield, with its steelmasters, or Manchester with its merchants. Mark Firth is supposed to have spent £60,000 on Oakbrook, while John Brown was said to have spent £100,000 on Endcliffe Hall<sup>1</sup>. As was shown in the last chapter, few Portsmouth families accumulated anything like such sums during their lives, and they certainly didn't build mansions around the Island. Yet, parading through a smaller arena than Sheffield, the Portsmouth bourgeoisie engaged in different forms of social display, and it is the purpose of this chapter to examine them<sup>2</sup>.

There are, of course, enormous difficulties in the path of the student of culture, difficulties that are magnified when

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<sup>1</sup>V.S. Doe, 'Some Developments in Middle Class Housing in Sheffield, 1830-1875', in Pollard and Holmes (eds.), op. cit., esp. p.181: 'they were the active centres of social and political life as well as the tangible expression of the achievements of self-made men'. It must be remembered that there were official government houses in Portsmouth - but not on the scale of the steel giants' mansions.

<sup>2</sup>This chapter does not analyse religious adherence, for reasons of space, and partly because there are already three very good studies of the relations between religion and social class: H. Macleod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City, 1974; A.A. MacLaren, Religion and Social Class: The Disruption Years in Aberdeen, 1974; J. Obelkevich, Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875, Oxford, 1976.

The question of 'middle class' adherence to popular rituals and drinking habits is dealt with in Chapter Eleven, although not in as much detail as I should have liked.

the culture stresses - as did the Victorian middle class - the values of reticence, discretion and privacy. The approaches chosen in this chapter are widespread, to say the least, collating both quantitative<sup>1</sup> and literary sources, in an attempt to identify shreds of evidence which bear upon the relationship between social position and status. Since status hierarchies very often defy 'the pretensions of sheer property', some light has to be thrown upon the subject of just how contemporaries did regard material wealth, before considering the degree to which people were prepared to use some of that wealth on the consumption of luxury items. Purchasing luxury goods and services was, of course, to little purpose unless one took part in public activities, bringing the evidence of one's 'sheer property' to bear upon social connections. Public occasions, then, can be studied for the light they throw upon the attitudes of different sections of the bourgeoisie towards one another. Questions about who took part, and what purposes the public occasion was intended to serve, are therefore vital. Since the material used for this chapter, and particularly that bearing upon personal life, is relatively scarce, I have had to make the perhaps unjustified assumption that essentially scattered evidence represents the wider attitudes and behaviour of specific social groups, with identifiable group interests<sup>2</sup>. Bearing

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<sup>1</sup>One is reminded of E.P. Thompson's remark in Making of the English Working Class: 'The finest meshed sociological net cannot give us a pure specimen of class, any more than it can give us one of deference or of love' (p.9).

<sup>2</sup>The question of whether one can identify any relationship of determination between material conditions, social group and collective mentality, is one that has, it seems to me, to be established by historical investigation of particular conditions, groups and mentalities, not resolved by philosophical ratiocination. But for the

in mind the varying historical existence and formation of both social groups and their interests, we have to accept that any conclusions that may be drawn regarding the importance of visible life-style for social place, political influence, or economic success, will therefore be somewhat tenuous.

The relationship between wealth and status depends upon the varying meanings that people attach to wealth itself<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps it is significant that, even at the high point of political economy's tide, there was little explicit discussion of wealth itself, so far as can be judged. It was assumed, with political economy, that inequality was inevitable; but not that it should go to extremes. Erasmus Jackson, lecturing the Philosophical Society upon the topic in 1831,

after defending the science [i.e. political economy] from the charges of theorizing and uncertainty, proceeded to illustrate its importance by a series of propositions...tending to prove, that although it is the manifest order of Providence that there should be various grades in society, without which the whole fabric of the body politic would crumble to pieces; yet it was never intended there should be such a great disparity in the condition of mankind, that any considerable number of the healthy population of a country should be unable to provide for themselves. It was shown that this evil had arisen partly from inattention and

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other view, see A. Cutler, B. Hindess, P. Hirst & A. Hussain, Marx's 'Capital' and Capitalism Today, vol.1, 1977, pp.182-95.

<sup>1</sup> S. Ossowski sees wealth as affecting status distinctions by possessing prestige in itself; by paying for a prestigious life-style; or by acting as a symbol, or external referent, of (for example) the worldly sign of perseverance in the service of the Lord: Class Structure in the Social Consciousness, p. 50.

abuse of existing institutions, and the adoption of some remedial plan was strongly urged upon the attention of the Legislature 1.

The newspaper report unfortunately does not make clear exactly which 'existing institutions' were being so unfairly abused; but there is little doubt that Jackson had something pretty specific in mind. He would have been thinking of the vast unearned wealth of the aristocracy, protected by corn laws and inheritance laws from the fresh and healthy breeze of competition. There were two particular kinds of distinction of wealth in Jackson's mind: the absolute indigence of the poor; the hard-earned wealth of what were often called 'the industrious classes'; and the monopolistic wealth of the aristocracy and its hangers-on<sup>2</sup>.

This was a common enough theme of the first half of the century, before the great compromise of 1846 and the great fear of 1848 had reduced the tension between urban and landed elites. At times the anti-aristocratic rhetoric could become almost glowing:

Next to the love of personal and political liberty for himself and his children, in the mind of an Englishman, is his desire for the acquisition of property, more especially of that species which he ever loves to mention under the characteristic

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Herald, 6 Mar. 1831.

<sup>2</sup>There is a useful discussion of social imagery in A. Briggs, 'The language of "class" in early nineteenth century England', in Briggs & Saville (eds.), Essays in Labour History, 1967, pp. 43-73.

description of his freehold, marking in its literal, as it does in its historical import, his emancipation from the dependence and shackles of feudal domination 1.

This was the Committee of the Literary and Philosophical Society, hailing the purchase of premises of its own. It was a conception of property that had a history of its own, judging wealth according to whether it was the product of constant industry and thrift<sup>2</sup>. From this point of view, the idle pauper who wore the grey suit was no more reprehensible than the one who wore an ermine robe<sup>3</sup>. There was even a certain amount of agonizing about the contribution of the armed forces; but Portsmouth knew which side of its toast was the buttered:

The greatest political economist, who was not like those of the present day, said that soldiers and sailors were producers of wealth; but the political economists of the present day said they were the consumers of wealth. Where would their [sic] commerce have been but for the Army and Navy? 4

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<sup>1</sup>Rep. Committee of the Portsmouth and Portsea Literary and Philosophical Society, 1828-29, p.7.

<sup>2</sup>C.B. MacPherson, 'Capitalism and the changing concept of property' in E. Kamenka & R.S. Neale (eds.), Feudalism, Capitalism and Beyond, 1975, pp. 105-24.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. 'Keeping up the Aristocracy', Economist 20 July 1850.

<sup>4</sup>Speech of A. Cudlipp, a tory, at the Portsmouth and Portsea Hebrew Beneficial Institute, HT 1 Feb. 1870.

Trade, not surprisingly, beat economic theory hands down every time.

Expenditure upon items that might equally have been regarded as 'aristocratic' in style was by no means low even in the supposedly class-conscious 1830s and '40s<sup>1</sup>. This is apparent from the sums paid in Assessed Taxes, levied upon items of luxury consumption such as private houses with eight or more windows, carriages, riding horses, game licences, menservants, and hair powder<sup>2</sup>. According to figures prepared in 1831, Portsmouth township was paying far more than the rest of the Borough in per capita terms. This (see Table One) is hardly surprising, since it contained in High Street and the Point a retail zone devoted to supplying the varied (and often taxable) needs of officers in the Army and Navy; a number of officers also lived in the old township, as did most of the lawyers and several medical men. It is reasonable to conclude that these were the more conspicuously lavish inhabitants of the town. The pattern was weaker by the 1860s,

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<sup>1</sup>This is what is actually under discussion in A.D.M. Phillips & J.R. Walton, 'The distribution of personal wealth in English towns in the mid-nineteenth century', lxiv 1975, pp. 35-48, Trans. Inst. of British Geographers.

<sup>2</sup>Window taxes amounted to roughly one half of the total sum collected in the 1840s: Ibid., p.41. The exact meaning of the tax returns varies enormously, since in the 1830s in particular they were subjected to a number of reforms; they were extremely unpopular with liberals. For a description of the assessed taxes, see S. Dowell, A History of Taxation and Taxes in England from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, vol. 2, Book iii, 1884, and also Book iv.



TABLE ONE: ASSESSED TAXES PAID, 1831 <sup>1</sup>

	Portsmouth town	Portsea parish	Borough Total
Total sum paid	£3,768	£6,685	£10,453
Mean per capita	0.47	0.16	0.21

Source: Howard Mss., in B.M. Add. Mss. 40/001, f.379.

TABLE TWO: ASSESSED TAXES PAID, 1845-7, IN PORTSMOUTH AND  
SOUTHAMPTON

	Portsmouth	Southampton
Total sum paid per annum (mean)	£18,058	£9,272
Mean per capita	0.34	0.34

Source: Parl. Papers 1847-48, xxxix, 235.

TABLE THREE: ASSESSED TAXES PAID IN PORTSMOUTH AND  
SOUTHAMPTON, 1864

	Portsmouth Boro	Southampton Boro	Portsmouth Township only
Total sum paid	£5,324	£4,940	£764
Mean per capita	0.06	0.11	0.10

Source: Parochial Tax Ledger, 1864, Land & Assessed Taxes,  
P.R.O. IR 2/67.

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<sup>1</sup>It is, unfortunately, impossible to give a separate column for Southsea in any of these Tables.

with the development of Portsea as a shopping centre and of Southsea as a residential suburb, both of which appear to spend more upon luxuries than do Portsmouth township (Table 3).<sup>1</sup>

Tables 2 and 3 allow us to compare changing patterns of consumption in Portsmouth and Southampton. In the forties, it seems that roughly the same amount was paid in each town, considerably more than in York, Liverpool, Birmingham or Manchester<sup>2</sup>. In Portsmouth's case, much luxury consumption was carried out by army and navy officers, often drawn from gentry backgrounds and presumably living in a style to which they liked to think they had become accustomed. Such a life was still less stylish than that apparent in Bath of the 1840s<sup>3</sup>. The implication to be drawn from Table 3, however, is that Portsmouth had slipped behind Southampton. This may well reflect, first, the continuing importance of Southampton as a fairly quiet residential area containing a thriving commercial area; overwhelmingly the largest payer of Assessed Taxes in 1864 was "the wealthy upper class ward"

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<sup>1</sup> Assessed taxes were under constant revision throughout this period, and the window tax was actually abolished. Tables 1, 2 and 3 are not, therefore, a series. They are not intended to show trends over time, and cannot be used to deduce them, but rather each Table has to be regarded as self-sufficient.

<sup>2</sup> The figures were:           £  
York                       0.27  
Birmingham           0.13  
Liverpool               0.11  
Manchester              0.05

See A. Armstrong, Stability and change in an English County Town: A Social Study of York, 1801-51, 1974, p.30.

Also Walton and Phillips, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup> The figure was £0.59 per capita. Bath's social structure is discussed in R.S. Neal's Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century, 1972, ch.2.

of All Saints'<sup>1</sup>.

The Assessed Taxes may tell us that less people were committed to a certain style of life in Portsmouth than in Southampton, but they do not tell us what meanings were attached to it. To understand this, we have to pry into the cultural setting in which luxury consumption could be chosen. This in turn requires that we lift the cloak which later Victorians laid over what they regarded as the 'unsuitable' amusements of the late Georgians. William Saunders, looking back at his youth from the 1880s, wrote that

Portsmouth could not at the time we are speaking of boast of such a fashionable and populous suburb as the Southsea of the present day; for then that locality was as limited in extent as its amusements were rare. The fashionable world was almost exclusively confined to the services, and the gossip, like the amusements of the day, were [sic] of anything but a satisfactory character. It is true there was a theatre in the town, but what a theatre - dingy, decayed, gasping out the last few years of its existence; there was a Mechanic's Institute at Portsea, but that only lingered, and there was in St. Mary's Street a building, boasting Doric or some other columns, dedicated to Philosophy, where

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<sup>1</sup> The figures were:	£
All Saints Extra, East	635
All Saints Extra, West	1,215
All Saints Infra	237
Holy Rhood	330
Portswood	493
St Johns	31
St Lawrence	191
St Mary's Extra	602
St Mary's Infra	591
St Mary's Chapel	486
St Michael	31

(Parochial Tax ledger, 1864, land and assessed taxes, P.R.O. IR/2/67). The quote is from P.H. Morris, 'Docks, railways and Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Southampton', in J.B. Morgan & P. Peberdy (eds.), Collected Essays on Southampton 1968, p.84.

twice a month gloomy lectures were delivered; and sometimes by way of a treat experimental chemistry was introduced, which on more than one occasion drove the audience out into the street half suffocated with the noxious gases evolved.... Save that of a marching band, good music was a rarity, and thousands flocked gladly every Sunday evening to the square of the Clarence Barracks to hear the band of the Royal Marines. But it was the close, stuffy Assembly Rooms on Southsea Beach where the elite and beauty of the neighbourhood congregated, listened to the band, bathed, danced, talked scandal and fashion, and read the newspapers 1.

Saunders was not alone in his memory of a social desert<sup>2</sup>.

Yet Saunders' memories were themselves part of a process of cultural self-definition, in which respectability erased earlier memories of a less restrained culture. Saunders' sense of monotony is clear: the passage quoted is taken from a description of a duel, something which the author blames onto the boredom of the participants. Saunders speaks in terms of confinement ('gasping', 'suffocated', 'confined') and lifelessness ('lingering', 'last few years of its existence'). To the writer of the 1880s, the world of his youth - the 1840s - was negative and static; nothing ever happened. This view is highly ideological; simply in terms of what it purports to be describing, it will become apparent in this chapter (and also in chapter 10) that the forties

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<sup>1</sup>Saunders, op.cit., pp. 197-8.

<sup>2</sup>See the claim of John A. George, chief warder at the Convict Prison, that in the 1840s 'The only amusement people had was an occasional circus, but in the summer a few Dockyardmen played cricket under the elms in what is now Middle Street', News 9 Sept. 1909.

in particular were a crucial period of cultural change, with a clear shift of direction from an older 'rough' culture towards a newer 'respectable' one<sup>1</sup>.

It was rarely complained in the thirties and forties that people were crushed by ennui, at least not in sources that I have seen. The Beauties of England and Wales claimed that the town was well provided with leisure activities:

The amusements of the upper classes are sought in subscription assemblies, held at the Crown Inn, occasional concerts, etc. These, however, have less influence than the pleasures of the Theatre, which is always crowded, and generally suffered to remain open somewhat longer than the 'law allows' 2.

Not only were the Theatre's hours somewhat on the shady side of the law; so also were some of the clientele. Dibdin, who visited it in 1801-2, wrote that the Theatre was as well-conducted as an assembly room (presumably he had Nash's Bath rooms in mind): 'It is true prostitutes were seen there in plenty, but there was a great space set apart from them, where they were obliged to conform to the rules and orders, or be turned out'<sup>3</sup>. Rowdiness and disorderly behaviour were common, and the theatre was closed by the Justices in 1791 and '95; in 1800 a group of naval officers was fined

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. G. Stedman Jones, 'Working class culture....', op.cit., pp. 462-5. I hope I have not exaggerated the point: from the 1780s there had been discussion about the responsibility of the 'higher orders' for setting the moral tone of society by example and Hannah More in particular addressed herself to this issue: see A. Briggs, Age of Improvement, pp. 71-3.

<sup>2</sup>Brayley and Britton, op.cit., p. 329.

<sup>3</sup>C. Dibdin, Observations on a Tour Through Scotland and England, 1801-2, cit. in H. Sargeant, 'A History of Portsmouth Theatres', Portsmouth Papers xiii, 1971, p. 9.

after drawing their swords upon constables<sup>1</sup>.

The Theatre was among the attractions listed breathlessly by William Charpentier in his Guide of 1837 - a list that bears a remarkable similarity to that drawn up by Saunders fifty years later:

Among the summer amusements at Southsea (besides those off the King's Rooms, where are occasionally balls and concerts) military evolutions on the Common form a highly pleasing spectacle.... On this Common also the garrison and other clubs exercise the athletic game of cricket. Aquatic exercises also form a pleasing and healthy amusement. In these excursions, for a few shillings boat-hire, the waterman will lay his boat up to a situation where mackerel, whiting and other fish may be caught, sometimes in such quantities as are in value more than the expense of the diversion. Other species of amusement (now become fashionable with the officers of the navy and army) are rowing matches. Akin to this is that grand gala the annual Regatta: on this occasion hundreds, or rather thousands of vessels and boats of all sizes, from the fishing punt to the princely yacht, are seen as it were covering the face of the water with animation; whilst tens of thousands of genteely dressed persons line the ramparts and beach, where they enjoy this truly national fete. Added to this we have the annual races at Soberton, 14 miles from Southsea; at Goodwood, the seat of the Duke of Richmond near Chichester; and occasionally on Portsdown Hill.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

Nor is Southsea void of amusements in the winter season; when snipe are to be found in abundance beyond Southsea Castle, and every species of wildfowl that arrives on the English coast.... This, with well-regulated assemblies, conducted on a subscription plan - musical festivals during the season - whist clubs at the several hotels - several billiard rooms - a debating society - a Forensic court - lectures at the Philosophical Society's room on Friday evenings, and the Mechanics' Institute on Monday evenings, and a well-managed Theatre - whose Boards are supplied throughout the Season by performers of respectable talent, with occasional accessions of London stars; all tend to 'guile the cold winter away' <sup>1</sup>.

The list is by no means exhaustive, and it is, of course, confined to public behaviour. One of the most important functions of these activities was that you could be seen to be taking part in them, not only by other participants but also by outsiders.

Visibility was (and is) central to public activities intended to display existing, or enhance future, status. Those attending a public ball were visible to the hoi polloi as they walked from carriage to ballroom; to readers of the local press; to the gossips of the drawing and smoking rooms. They were visible to others attending the ball; the entrance in particular was a tense and important moment, timed so that you arrived after those who were your inferior in status, yet before those who were your superiors<sup>2</sup>. Inevitably there

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<sup>1</sup>New Portsmouth, Southsea, Anglesey and Hayling Island Guide, Portsmouth 1837, p. 87-90.

<sup>2</sup>The Sicilian aristocrat Don Tommasi di Lampedusa describes the same phenomenon in his novel Il Gattopardo, 1958 p. 185.

was occasionally some uncertainty about the hierarchy of status, with near-disastrous results: in December 1831, for instance, a local paper complained of those who subscribed to a dance, only to 'make a point of attending so late in the evening. There were not five persons present at half past ten o'clock'<sup>1</sup>. By such activities, one could do more than filter out undesirable social contacts and monitor the marriage market<sup>2</sup>; in provincial Britain, at any rate, public displays also staked out claims to prestige in the community.

Of course, leisure pursuits were also simply what their name implies: non-work activities that did not necessarily have a 'useful' result. Shooting had very little to do with the getting of food; it might have some economic purpose, such as the control of vermin; no doubt the land and the gun mirrored the huntsman's ownership and power over nature; but it was also a skill that undoubtedly satisfied many a squire and poacher alike, for its own sake. Moreover, to shoot with a fellow-landowner, a tenant or one's solicitor was a pleasant way of conducting business and of ensuring a sense of obligation at the same time<sup>3</sup>. Other social activities mirrored this blend of functions and motives.

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Herald, 11 Dec. 1831.

<sup>2</sup>As Leonore Davidoff suggests, London Society was intended to do: The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season, 1973, p. 49. The point is made by George Meredith in Evan Harrington.

<sup>3</sup>In 1848 some 20 persons from Portsmouth held game licences. Eight have not been further identified, and may have been (transient) officers; the rest included two solicitors, two surgeons and two wine merchants. There were 24 holders in Southampton - an interesting index of the differing social structures of the two bourgeoisies. HT 23 Sept., 1848.



Shooting was an activity which linked a handful of townsmen with the landowners. Dancing offered an opportunity for much larger groups of more heterogeneous people to congregate upon more equal terms. It followed the Season: the London season ran from roughly mid-April till mid-July, the Portsmouth season from early December to the following March; at least, this was true until the early fifties, when the enterprising Henry Hollingsworth opened his Rooms for a summer season<sup>1</sup>. The Balls were rather variably attended. In 1830, for example, a Ball in January attracted several peers, generals and admirals, a number of naval officers, 'and about 150 other fashionables'. Two and a half months later, another attracted 'upwards of two hundred persons...', including the Heads of Departments, all the resident Nobility and Clergy, and Naval and Military Officers, etc., 'and it was reckoned that:

The assemblies during the past winter, seem to have given more general satisfaction, than those of any former season. This we attribute entirely to the influence which has been used by the Patronesses respectively in promoting the various amusements of these towns. 2

In 1832, when the freeze upon naval expenditure was at its deepest, the Telegraph noted that:

We muster above 70,000 souls, and yet a monthly Ball on Monday last, at the Green Row Rooms, is graced or rather disgraced with an attendance

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<sup>1</sup>G. Stedman Jones, Outcast London, p.34, HT 4 May 1850.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Herald, 21 Mar., 4 Apr. 1830.

of 40 persons! This is unjust, not only to him who caters for our fashionables [i.e. James Hollingsworth], but to the younger branches of families who are entitled to some amusement <sup>1</sup>.

The greatest local organizer of subscription Balls was James Hollingsworth, a printer, who was well aware of the importance of patronage in attracting a clientele. In 1830, for instance, he had drawn heavily upon the town's naval and military elite, winning the permission of Lady Seymour, the Hon. Mrs. Elliott, Lady Williams and the Hon. Lady Stopford, for their names to be used. He also invited a list of gentlemen to act as stewards, generally drawn from the army, the navy, and the town's commercial elite, in equal proportions (in 1830, for instance, these included members of three leading business families: Lindegren's the merchants, Grant's the bankers, and Garretts the brewers). Even better, Hollingsworth used a visit in 1824 from the Duke of Clarence as the occasion to rename his premises the 'Clarence Rooms' (and, after Clarence was crowned in 1830, the 'King's Rooms'). The enterprising Mr. Hollingsworth managed to push the number of subscriptions to his Rooms from 200 when he took them over, to 1,100 at the time of William IV's accession<sup>2</sup>.

There were other organizers of Balls than Hollingsworth, of course. The more successful charities, especially the

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 9 Jan. 1832. James Hollingsworth went bankrupt in January 1833: P.R.O., B 4/45. He was a director of the Floating Bridge, and subscribed to the Chichester railway line in 1845 for £250.

<sup>2</sup>R.C. Riley, 'The growth of Southsea as a naval satellite and Victorian Resort', Portsmouth Papers xvi, 1972, p.5.

Church school funds, benefited from dances (although occasionally they asked Hollingsworth to arrange them). On the 15 January 1830 'upwards of a hundred fashionables' attended at Mile End House, where Major and Mrs. Henry Dundas Campbell gave a 'splendid supper and Ball'; on 18 June 1831, two hundred guests ate, dined and danced on board a ship at Spithead at the invitation of Sir Edward and Lady Codrington<sup>1</sup>. The cost of such affairs, however, prohibited most local middle class citizens from holding private Balls; the majority were public affairs.

Who went to the Balls? It was agreed that they formed a marriage market for young ladies, whose families thought that a young naval officer would suit them very well. Not any young officer, though, as Jane Austen pointed out:

'This is the Assembly night', said William.  
'If I were at Portsmouth, I should be at it, perhaps'.

'But you do not wish yourself at Portsmouth, William?'

No, Fanny, that I do not. I shall have enough of Portsmouth, and of dancing too, when I cannot have you. And I do not know that there would be any good in going to the Assembly, for I might not get a partner. The Portsmouth girls turn up their noses at any body who has not a commission. One might as well be nothing as a midshipman. One is nothing indeed. You remember the Gregorys; they are grown up amazing fine girls, but they will hardly speak to me, because Lucy is courted by a Lieutenant 2.'

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Portsea and Gosport Herald, 17 Jan. 1830, H.T. 20 June 1831.

<sup>2</sup>R.W. Chapman (ed.), The Novels of Jane Austen, Mansfield Park, vol. iii, 1934, Book 2 Ch.7.

This is Midshipman William Price, talking to his sister Fanny; it is fiction of course, and possibly an instance of the famous irony. Yet Jane Austen had two brothers in the Navy, and was acquainted with Portsmouth<sup>1</sup>; her vision seems credible.

It is only an impression, but it does seem that officers were overwhelmingly the dominant male participants in the Balls, whether private or subscription. On special occasions, the citizens of substance attended as well: in 1850, for instance, five hundred attended a fancy dress ball organized by Hollingsworth's son Henry: they included Fitzclarence, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Port Admiral (Bladen Capel); but they also included Dr. Rolph (a town councillor and surgeon), William Engledue (a surgeon and agitator for organized professionalism), Alfred Heather (a merchant, wharf owner, and Southsea developer), and Mr. John Dorrien of the Bank of England. Local gentry were also prominent among the subscribers to the New Rooms in Portsmouth township: Edward Carter, a brewer, and John Elias Atkins, the banker, were among them, as were William Grant and George Gillman, both bankers, and Julian Slight and William Thompson, both surgeons. Julian Slight had also been present at other major fancy dress balls: in 1829, he wore Highland dress, alongside the Town Clerk (as Count Elmavira),<sup>a/</sup> newspaper editor.

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<sup>1</sup>D. Hopkinson, 'The Naval Career of Jane Austen's Brother', History Today xxvi, 1976, pp. 576-83.

(Bavarian Broom Girl), the wife of Major Campbell (Circassian Princess), and one Lieutenant Barry, who was dressed as 'Looney MacTwolter'<sup>1</sup>. What private fantasies were acted out at these affairs is anybody's guess, but they evidently filled a need.

The Balls were in part marriage markets, but they were also an arena for the display of skill: skill at dancing, at light conversation, at flirting. These could be satisfying in themselves, and in winning an appreciative audience. Although the Balls were undoubtedly fairly formal affairs, once entry was secured (one imagines the filtering process was less rigorous than in Nash's Bath) there was a certain intimacy among participants; by sheer association, those whose status might otherwise have been somewhat insecure could associate with the young aristocrats and landed gentry of the army and navy<sup>2</sup>. The relaxation of barriers was probably more marked at the fancy dress balls: a Circassian Princess could flirt delightfully, but similar behaviour by Mrs. Campbell would have brought a blush to that good lady's cheeks, not to mention her husband's; Looney MacTwolter might get away with things that would have landed Lieut. Barry in front of his commanding officer.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 12 Jan. 1829; Portsmouth Times, 22 June, 28 Sept. 1850.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jewson, op.cit. the social backgrounds of army and navy officers are discussed in Lewis, op.cit., p.22; C.B. Otley, 'The social origins of British Army Officers', Sociological Review xviii, 1970, p.224.

Since the Ball included premarital and other sexual contact-forming among its functions, it could hardly do without women. Yet much public display activity was political, and this almost automatically excluded domestic associations<sup>1</sup>. Women did not belong to the world of public wining and dining, for example, partly because this was a drink-centred activity, and therefore seen as unsuitable. 'It has frequently occurred to us to witness at public dinners a considerable degree of uproariousness towards the end of the evening', grumbled the Portsmouth Times after an M.P. had been shouted down by drunks during an after-dinner speech<sup>2</sup>. Other dinners were reported in the papers with disguised references to inebriety, such as the 'hilarity' that 'prevailed to a late hour'. Even drunkenness had its purpose, though, since men who had been 'hilarious' together were probably more intimate with one another than they had been beforehand.

The main function of the public dinner was to present a form of sociability where a public face of good-fellowship could be used to give an impression of cohesiveness and unanimity. It was not an arena for debate or policy formation, like the Town Council or public meeting; at the public dinner, a local dignitary could be invited to speak without fear of

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<sup>1</sup>There is a provocative discussion of all this in E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, p. 270: 'The home was the quintessential bourgeois world, for in it, and only in it, could the problems and contradictions of his society be forgotten or artificially eliminated'.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmouth Times, 22 June 1850.

the interruptions and disagreements that faced members of the Council or even Parliament<sup>1</sup>. For these reasons, its most effective uses were political.

Public dinners by London reformers had a long history, and Portsmouth reformers met to dine incessantly in the post-War years, celebrating one 'victory' after another, with no fear of Tory contradiction. By the 1870s the Tories were finding the public dinner an effective way of getting their message across. In 1870, January alone saw a Grand Liberal Banquet, a dinner of Artillery Volunteer N.C.O.s, and a Tradesmen's Supper; among other dinners that year were those of the Court Mechanics' Hope of Foresters, the Licensed Victuallers' Association, the Conservative Club, and the Conservative Working Men. The Conservative Working Men in particular had an unexpected success (and a worrying one for Liberals), attracting 450 to the Southsea rooms<sup>2</sup>.

The public dinner stood high in popularity in the 1870s, and was a common political weapon in the 1810s<sup>3</sup>. But in 1848-50, with memories of 1848 mingling with those of the anti-Corn Law campaign, public dinners became a way of trying to

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<sup>1</sup>It is suggested that the decline of willingness on the part of city 'Notables' in the twentieth century to serve in local government, is partly due to their distaste for being questioned and challenged all the time, especially in public: see I. Crewe, 'Studying elites in Britain', in (ed), Elites in Western Democracy, 1974, p.31.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmouth Times 23 Apr. 1870.

<sup>3</sup>For example, the Times reported 50 political dinners by buoyant Tories in the last quarter of 1876: D. Close, 'The Rise of the Conservatives in the Age of Reform', 7, p. 96.

bridge the gaps between social groups in a wider sense. When Lord Frederick Fitzclarence announced one such dinner in 1850, the Portsmouth Times ruminated upon the deeper implications of a public celebration involving both the local aristocratic elite and the town's business elites:

Isolation, or the fixed severance of different classes, is not simply disagreeable, it is also dangerous. A foe to human happiness who wished to perpetuate hostility could not devise a more subtle scheme for his devilish purpose than to prevent parties, whether states or individuals, from meeting, and thereby removing their mutual mis-understandings <sup>1</sup>.

While the reference in the Times was to the aristocracy and 'middle class', the principle of establishing harmonious 'class' relations extended a little further down. Lord George Lennox, for instance, used to give a dinner to local railway employees in gratitude for their services; he and his side-kick, Major Joseph Oates Travers, would walk in to cheers as the cloth was removed. This was a hangover from the tradition of roasting an ox for the servants, and Fitzclarence too fed the railway servants at his own expense.

The best insights into the intended functions of any social process often come when something goes wrong. One example of this is the dinner held in honour of Fitzclarence, celebrating the unveiling of two statues, of Wellington and Nelson, that he had donated to the Borough. This occasion

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Times 27 Apr. 1850.



really did seem as though it would bring together, at a pleasant, relaxed meal, men ranging from the son of a king to the radical grocer, John Sheppard (who was secretary of the dinner organizing committee). The diners (at 15s. a head) included the Mayor (Benjamine Bramble), the Port Admiral, the Yard Admiral Superintendent (Admiral Prescott), the Chaplain General (Rev. R. Gleig), and a swarm of lesser fleas. Initially, the evening looked set to celebrate aristocratic support for municipal pride, and urban acceptance of aristocratic patronage. Fitzclarence went out of his way to honour the values of local community leaders:

He considered it as his duty to assist his fellow citizens; for although he was a soldier, he did not consider that he had lost the title of citizen (cheers). <sup>1</sup>

But as the toasts went down, and the night drew on, harmony gave way to drunken jeering. Dr. Rolph, a local Liberal, could not make himself heard when he tried to propose the health of the Liberal M.P.s (one of whom, Francis Baring, had significantly stayed away - as had the Yard Engineer, Andrew Murray, also a Liberal). When one of the M.P.s, Sir George Staunton, rose to reply, 'loud interruptions of the most disgraceful character began to assail' him<sup>2</sup>. Other disasters beset the day (troops on the Common had forgotten to perform a mock Battle of Waterloo after the unveiling of the statues, while 'the lowest of the low'

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 22 June 1850.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

were rolling drunk and insulting the 'visiting fashionables'<sup>1</sup>). The distress that the officers' 'blackguardism', and the scenes on the Common, together caused was expressed through the letter columns for two months, and might have gone on longer had the editors not decided that further recrimination might be damaging<sup>2</sup>. The depth of the distress suggests that something deeper was at stake than a good meal; not only had the dinner failed to cement the upper classes, but it had seen the public humiliation of a representative of the town's people, by drunken aristocrats. In its failure, this dinner helps us to understand a general social function: that of presenting, and enjoying, a united front in a relaxed atmosphere.

If Balls and Dinners were events which helped members of the upper strata to be seen in public, to make social contacts, and perhaps consolidate prestige or political position, sport was far more concerned with skill for its own sake. The ability to bowl or bat, to run or row, represented valued strengths and skills that excited pleasure in spectators and participants. On the whole these skills were thought to be manly ones, and women found themselves excluded from most of the physical sports (apart, presumably because of its classical allusions, from archery). This had not always been the case: in 1813, for instance, two teams of women had

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> H.T., 12 Jan., 30 Mar., 13 Apr., 20 Apr., 22 June, 10 Aug. 1850; Portsmouth Times, 22, 29 June, 6 July, 10, 17, 31 Aug. 1850.

played cricket for a £5 purse at Milton; when one of them stopped play to suckle her child, the local newspapers reacted with mild interest, not with outrage<sup>1</sup>. This was the last known case of female cricket during this period.

Cricket was probably the largest spectator and participant sport; this was certainly true for the middle class, and possibly for the working class if one discounts sports that were really little more than an advert for the pubs.

Cricket had a long history in Hampshire, and was undoubtedly popular among working people: in 1816, for instance, the Yard Quartermen took on the Submeasurers, and lost<sup>2</sup>. In 1848, Fitzclarence and Admiral Ogle decided that there was nothing like it to undermine the Chartists: 'There is no amusement so well calculated to create a congeniality of feeling in all classes of society as a friendly contest in the manly game of cricket'<sup>3</sup>. This view did not take account of the fact that there was conflict among cricketers themselves about the way the game ought to be played<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Details can be found in Field (ed.), 'Diary of a Dockyard Worker', op.cit.

<sup>2</sup>H.T. 2 Sept. 1816.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 8 Apr. 1848. In a parallel move, the chief constable of Newcastle encouraged fairs to take men's minds off the Charter (R. Palmer & J. Raven [eds.], The Rigs of the Fair, Cambridge 1976, p.20). Life was not so simple, though: when Dr. Peter McDouall, the chartist lecturer, visited Brighton, he found that cricket was de rigueur among the local chartists (McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal, 26 June 1841).

<sup>4</sup>Some analogous disputes in football are discussed in A. Mason, op.cit.

Tension seems to have peaked in the 1830s, and can be schematically outlined as being between the open, fairly spontaneous working class game, and the more formal affair played by the middle- and upper-class clubs. The Free Press, a moral chartist-cum-radical paper, took up the issue when the Portsea Island C.C. started its 1839 season:

The petty system of exclusion, that so impaired the efficiency of the Club last season, is now abandoned, and the quality of the cloth on a man's back, will no longer be taken as the test of his capabilities as a cricketer 1.

Previously, it complained, 'bickerings and petty jealousies' had divided the town's cricketers<sup>2</sup>. The apparent openness of the Portsea Island C.C. was not matched by the East Hants C.C. or the Southsea C.C., which were run by men like Lord George Lennox. The Southsea ground was enclosed in 1850 'to assist the Committee in enforcing the exclusion of disorderly characters'<sup>3</sup>. There were complaints about the informal clothing of players: 'An Old Worn-Out Longstop' wrote that the Victoria and Royal Clubs at Gosport turned out like

fishermen drawing their nets; instead of a hat, they wore red worsted caps; instead of cricketing shoes or slippers, some of them had neither shoes nor stockings on, but played with naked feet, shirt sleeves tucked up, some blue and some white. I suppose next they will introduce the coal heavers hat or southwester. Can any respectable

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<sup>1</sup>P.P.G. Free Press, 27 June 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 4 May 1839.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 20 Apr. 1850.

person attend such exhibitions without disgust, and more particularly the ladies, who always give a zest to our public amusement? 1

The formalization of the game had a lot to do with the way that the more influential participants saw the correct relationship with the audience, and particularly its female members.

Ladies could be an important part of the audience: in 1831, for instance, the lady supporters of the Garrison C.C. subscribed towards a bat, to be awarded to the highest scorer<sup>2</sup>. The sport became the archetype of manliness: 'cricket, that manly and truly old English game', commented the Telegraph<sup>3</sup>. Definitions of manliness and femininity in Victorian Britain were complex, and have really only just started to be explored<sup>4</sup>; yet sport was undoubtedly one of the areas in which these definitions were elaborated, and among some social strata were accepted with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Pace the Free Press, 'the quality of the cloth on a man's back' was one important index of 'his abilities as a cricketer', when one remembers that cricket

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<sup>1</sup>P.P.G. Free Press, 6 June 1839.

<sup>2</sup>P.P.G. Herald, 29 May 1831.

<sup>3</sup>20 Apr. 1850.

<sup>4</sup>There are interesting points about this in J. Fowles, The French Lieutenant's Woman, 1968; R. Bromley, 'Natural Boundaries: the Social Function of Popular Fiction', Red Letters vii, 1978, pp. 46-53.

A long tradition in nineteenth century fiction does deal with this area, despite its reticence about sexuality as such, and perhaps literary critics have had something to say on the matter; I have not seen it, if this is so.

might mean a good deal more than bowling, batting and fielding.

The formalization of the game was accompanied by institutional divisions. First, there was a proliferation of entirely separate working class clubs, receiving sympathetic reporting from the local press, but otherwise (so far as one can tell) independent of patronage, generally playing on common land. A check of newspaper reports for 1870 shows that among 32 teams mentioned in the Hampshire Telegraph were several composed of working men. These included the Albert C.C. (run by apprentice shipwrights), a team of workmen from Clark's corkcutting business, a team of student engineers from the Yard, and a Mechanic's Club of men from Read's shipbuilding Yard. Several of these sides had played against the All Saints' C.C., itself probably a mix of working men and small tradesmen. There was also a team of officials from Portsmouth County Court, who had a fixture with the Chichester and Arundel County Court C.C.

Middle class clubs were entirely separated from their working class counterparts (there were, naturally, a number of school and other teams which fall into neither of my main two categories). The most important was the East Hants, playing at Southsea, with its own ground and a licenced club house. The management committee included Lord George Lennox, Major Joseph Oates Travers, and the banker William Grant<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 20, 27 Apr. 1850.

Lennox was a member of the Richmond family, forming a link between the Southsea elite (where he himself lived) and Goodwood; Travers, who as barrack-master could afford the time to be the town's most active J.P., was under Lennox's patronage, and was a leading campaigner against the rougher sides of the town's culture; Grant we have already encountered as a leading member of an old Whig banking family. Under the patronage of these men, the game developed as a highly respectable activity, sustaining itself as an attraction to the ladies and those who saw themselves in the role of urban 'gentry'. Undoubtedly the players included many army and navy officers; these also had their own clubs, both permanent (like the United Services C.C.) and regimental or temporary. Of the 32 clubs in 1870, twelve were for servicemen, and three made it plain in their titles that they consisted of officers only.

A third division within cricket came inside the bourgeois clubs, between Gentlemen and Players. Even the officers' clubs often had the odd corporal who was handy with a bat. The Gentleman, as is well known, always played for the pleasure of the sport and the good name of his club; the Player could move from one club to another, took a wage, and was concerned to win. In a way, the Player was the licenced fool of the game, and was expected to put on a show for the crowd. Few were so flamboyant as J. Woodman, the East Hants C.C.'s practice bowler, who on one afternoon in July 1851 ran a mile, walked a mile, hopped 440 yards, jumped over

twenty hurdles, knocked down 100 skittles and fetched the ball back every time, finally rolling fifty yards with his toes in his hands, all in under an hour. The Gentleman was expected to be a bit more restrained<sup>1</sup>.

It is, of course, hard to say whether the dockyardmen or corkcutters regarded cricket in the same way as the Gentlemen of the East Hants C.C., or even the editor of the Telegraph did. It would be absurd to expect all cricketers to attach the same meanings to the sport. To take one example from 1870, when bandsmen from the 82nd Regiment played a team from the 77th, on the Common, the two teams rioted afterwards in the Castle Tavern because the landlady refused to allow prostitutes to join players in the dressing rooms following the match. Troops from Southsea Castle had to be called in to quell the disturbances<sup>2</sup>. Yet who is to say that these soldiers did not see themselves as gallant sportsmen, trying to relax in a 'truly old English' way after their 'manly' exertions upon the Common? What can be said is that the game was highly stratified: bourgeois teams played bourgeois teams, and plebian ones played plebian ones. The Southsea and East Hants Clubs only seem to have played one another through the 1870 season; the All Saints team played twice against the Mechanics' XI, and once each against

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 26 July 1851.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 3, 6 Aug. 1870.



the Albert C.C., the Corkcutters, and the artillerymen's XI from Fort Elson. By segregation, the exclusiveness noted in the 1830s seems to have remained unweakened.

Definitions of manliness played a large part in establishing the importance of the Volunteer Movement as a leisure activity rather than a predominantly military one. Initially a middle class movement, the Volunteers rapidly became a largely working class one; with their formal military discipline, espousal of patriotism, and clear denial of serious class conflict, the Volunteers ought to have provided an ideal arena for the mingling of classes under strictly managed control<sup>1</sup>. Yet by the early 1870s discipline was ragged, patriotic motives apparently rare, and hostility between officers and men common. The Volunteer movement showed that increasing contact on the same terms between aristocrats and urban social leaders could lead to tension.

The majority of early Volunteers were professional or businessmen. . The more active category (the Effectives<sup>2</sup>) however, included a substantial minority

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<sup>1</sup>If we glance for one moment towards Europe, it is apparent that the decision (if indeed it was as conscious as that word implies) to let working class volunteers carry rifles - only eleven years after the monster chartist petition - was startling, as is noted by a contributor to the Society for the Study of Labour History's 1975 Conference, 'The working class and leisure: Class expression and/or social control', Bulletin, xxxii, 1976, p.16. The history of the Volunteers has been effectively muddled over by Hugh Cunningham, The Volunteer Force, 1976.

<sup>2</sup>Membership was divided into two classes:  
(1) Honorary members, contributing £2 2s minimum, and £4 extra for each enrolled member whom they wished to nominate to receive a free uniform;  
(2) Enrolled members, subscribing £1 1s. if they bought their own uniform, or 10s. if they were nominees. There were two types of enrolled men: the effectives (who had to attend so many drills every year) and non-effectives, who took little part in 'military' activities.  
The rule book of the Fifth Hants is in P.C.R.O. CC 2/2

of artizans and clerks. As elsewhere<sup>1</sup>, the Force presumably became more proletarian in composition, particularly upon the formation of the Third Hants Artillery Battalion, composed of Dockyardmen and their officers. By 1867 the membership of the local battalions came to well over a thousand: the Fifth Hants Rifles had 327 members, the Third Artillery 366 members, and the fashionable Southsea-based Second Hants Artillery had 457<sup>2</sup>.

From the outset there were difficulties with the officers. Volunteers preferred the election of officers to their appointment, which was hardly to be reciprocated by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire (who had patronage over the Corps). Nevertheless, the Lord Lieutenant was (initially at least) prepared to listen to the representations of the men; however, even then the battalions tended to choose retired military men (the Dockyardmen chose their own Yard officers), who in turn resented the commands that issued from Winchester Castle. Between 1860 and 65, eleven officers of the Rifle battalion resigned their commissions<sup>3</sup>. These included the first Commanding Officer, Sir David Thurlow Cunninghame, who left in March 1860 saying that he would not wear the green uniform stipulated by the Lord Lieutenant, having spent years of his life in a 'smart regiment of lancers'; two years

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<sup>1</sup>Cunningham, op.cit., pp. 34-38.

<sup>2</sup>Parl. Papers 1867-8, xlii, p. 829.

<sup>3</sup>Hants C.R.O., LL 56, passim.

later Major George Preston Vallancey walked out in umbrage at the omission of his name and rank from the Army list<sup>1</sup>. The Town Clerk, John Howard, resigned because he had been passed over for promotion from Ensign to Lieutenant; the man who had passed him over, Henry Ford, himself resigned in 1864 after the Lord Lieutenant criticised lack of discipline in the following terms:

I am ashamed of his shuffling crowd for disobeying an order. Oh dear, what a miserable set of officers many of the Volunteer Corps have, without a particle of military feeling & experience belonging to them, which is only to be acquired by early practice & a proper breaking in to know what order & discipline is 2.

The Commander of the Second Artillery Volunteers, Captain Hall, resigned because the principles of seniority adopted in the Force meant that his Brigade Commander was Lieut.-Col. Sturdee, the Assistant Master Shipwright in the Yard, who commanded the largest battalion in the Brigade.

Hall's resignation illustrates the difficulties faced by the authorities in appointing officers. What was involved was an explicit, formal, institutional ranking of men who were normally judged by criteria that allowed some flexibility in interpretation. Hall himself claimed that he accepted the elective principle, under which Sturdee had been made commander of the Dockyard battalion; but

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, 24 Mar., 23 Dec. 1862; H.T., 10 Mar. 1860.

<sup>2</sup>H.C.R.O. LL 56, 27 Aug., 17 Nov. 1864; H.T. 31 Mar. 1860.

as an old military man, I cannot and will not serve. . . under any officer appointed as a brigadier who has not seen service.

Dr. J.W. Moore Miller, a Southsea tory and M.O. to the Second Artillery battalion, was even more outspoken.

Proposing a toast to Hall, he went on:

They were all aware of the old fable of 'Jupiter and the Frogs'. The frogs desired a king, and, in answer to their prayer, Jupiter threw them down a log of wood, which was sufficient for them. The artillery Volunteers required a Lieutenant-Colonel of Brigade, but their Jupiter did not send them a log of wood; he sent them a carpenter. (Great laughter and cheering). 1

By 1871 the local Volunteers were short of three surgeons, two captains, sixteen lieutenants and three ensigns<sup>2</sup>.

Portsmouth, however, missed the open disputes between Winchester Castle and the Force that happened in some other areas. In Southampton, for instance, a company was disbanded for refusing to accept any other officers than those it had elected, while the entire Basingstoke force was disbanded in 1864 for refusing to accept orders from any outsider<sup>3</sup>. Most trouble tended to be internal, partly stemming from boredom with the endless drills, partly from resentment of the officers. 'We feel there is a lack of spirit among the young men of the borough', said the Times in 1870; the rank and file of the Second Artillery had not bothered to

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Guardian, 21 Feb., H.T. 2 Mar. 1861.

<sup>2</sup>Army List, January 1872.

<sup>3</sup>Patterson, op.cit., vol. 2, pp. 138-41; T.S. Cave, History of the First Volunteer Battalion Hants Regiment 1859-89, 1905, ch. iv, for further instances.

turn up for exercise on Governor's Green before the annual inspection, although all the officers had been there<sup>1</sup>. In May 1870 a drill of the combined Artillery reached the level of farce when one of the men slapped Major Cunningham's horse on the rump with a rifle butt; the horse bolted, throwing the Major; despite the offer of a reward, the culprit was not discovered<sup>2</sup>. Sergeants were inclined to rather express their feelings vocally than physically: it was remarkable, said one of them at an annual dinner, that he had received 20 letters from officers declining to attend: 'The non-commissioned officers of the 5th Hants were exceedingly unfortunate at these annual gatherings..., for no matter what day was fixed, they [the officers] never honoured them with their presence'. In March 1870, the sergeants complained that the officers neglected the elected Volunteers Council<sup>3</sup>. In the early years, when most sergeants were still middle class, they were jeered during the Fifth Riflemen's banquet; one ill-disposed rifleman called the N.C.O.s 'a load of \_\_\_\_\_ muffs'<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>The Fifth Rifles also had a poor attendance record:  
see e.g. Portsmouth Times, 30 July, 10 Sept., 17 Dec. 1870.

<sup>2</sup>H.T. 21 May 1870.

<sup>3</sup>Portsmouth Times, 12 Mar. 1870, H.T. 24 Dec. 1870.

<sup>4</sup>H.T. 25 Aug. 1860.

Yet, for all the disagreeable grumbling in the ranks, the cachet of a military title still attracted leading men to become officers. Many were professional men, serving in their capacity as surgeons or chaplains. Some were prominent businessmen: Edwin Galt of the Second Artillery, a wine merchant and brewer and brothel owner, was a Captain in 1861, a Lieutenant Colonel by 1871; Mark E. Frost, private schoolowner, of the same corps, also a Captain in 1861, was a Major in 1871. Both of these men liked to flaunt their titles in private life. Lieutenants in 1861 included William Seagrove, a master tailor and shirtmaker; Timothy White, the chemist; George G. Palmer, a Southsea wine merchant; Joseph Lush, a Southsea brewer. Prestige, of course, was important. Also there were the basic skills of soldiering, not to mention its 'glamour'; as well as the drills, there were frequent dinners, and monthly shooting matches for a silver challenge vase. The military men do not seem to have ever accepted the 'pretensions' of the tradesmen-officers: in 1871, for instance, Major Gore-Brown refused to allow an officer from another Portsmouth Corps into the Fifth Hants Drill Hall (now the Polytechnic Library). Gore-Brown was placed under arrest (by a farmer and an ex-officer in the Bengal army), and in the subsequent enquiry it was discovered that he and his superior officer had refused to speak to one another for some time<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.C.R.O. LL 56, 20 Dec. 1871.

The force does not seem to have enjoyed much prestige in the community. It was stoned as it marched through Landport in 1860<sup>1</sup>. By 1870 there was general agreement that it was in decay: 'The volunteer movement has now reached a crisis in its history', commented the Telegraph in January; 'it would take very little either to dissolve the corps altogether, or to put them on to a firm and satisfactory footing'<sup>2</sup>. Captain Conway-Gordon (late of the Bengal Fusiliers) 'had always found a want of sympathy on the part of the public of Portsmouth with the volunteers'<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps this was not too surprising: while Volunteer Reviews might be an attractive spectacle, many of the Southsea elite would have recalled the comments passed upon the officers in the early days. The cachet of the uniform and rank had to be weighed against the indignity of having your horse slapped on the rump, or of hobnobbing with grocers and chemists. A retired army officer, provided he was not too fussy about the society he kept, could persuade himself that he was still serving his country; but most serving officers thought the military value of the force was low, regarding it with contempt<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 16 June 1860.

<sup>2</sup>H.T. 15 Jan. 1870.

<sup>3</sup>H.T. 9 Nov. 1870.

<sup>4</sup>Cunningham, op.cit., pp. 61, 86. In general, the Portsmouth evidence seems to confirm Cunningham's conclusions, which are that the force was less a military than a social institution, that if patriotic at first the motives of volunteers later became more complex, and that increasingly the movement was held together by companionship rather than discipline. Op.cit., ch. vi.

Recreational behaviour of the various types so far studied (dancing, dining, cricketing, volunteering) may have provided a way of stylizing one's social contacts, although the results were sometimes unpredictable. However, it is difficult to be precise about how many people took part in each activity, and even harder to be precise about who they were. Dancing and dining were both patronized by members of the aristocracy and gentry, who were usually officers stationed in the town for the time being; they were sometimes joined by a minority of local social leaders in these activities. Cricket involved most of the social spectrum, but (despite claims to the contrary) different clubs tended to play only teams whose social background was similar to their own. Volunteering again cut through the classes, and despite the highly regulated and formal nature of the links between upper and lower ranks, its pan-class membership was one of several forces which reduced its prestigiousness. It seems, then, that there was no absolute consensus about how social status was defined in Victorian Portsmouth. This in itself was not surprising; no society has a unanimous definition of the status hierarchy, and Victorian society in particular was in a state of flux<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Ossowski, op.cit., p. 51: 'Descent as a determinant of social class is a relic of an estate or caste system.... At the same time, the victorious bourgeois class sets personal qualifications up against the prestige conferred by descent, and gives precedence to economic criteria of social status'. Also F. Parkin, 'Strategies of social closure in class formation', Social Analysis of Class Structure, 1974, pp. 6-7.



If one cultural phenomenon bound all classes together in an agreed index of status, it was servant-keeping and the meanings attached to it<sup>1</sup>. It would be wrong to suggest that no working men employed domestic servants in Victorian Portsmouth, nor that all members of the bourgeoisie had one<sup>2</sup>; yet we can say that there was a very strong association between place in status hierarchy and the number and type of servants one employed. Servants, and the 'servant problem', were the staple of bourgeois female conversation<sup>3</sup>, and both individual and collective strategies were developed to overcome the difficulties of getting them. In 1801, for instance, a Register Office for servants was set up in Queen Street; hardly a charitable appeal for a school or a rescue society passed without some mention of the useful servants that would be produced<sup>4</sup>. It is difficult to find out very much about

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<sup>1</sup>L. Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England', Journal of Social History vii, 1974, pp. 406-28; Hobsbawm, Age of Capital.

<sup>2</sup>Foster discusses the cultural and religious determinants of servant-keeping, op.cit., pp. 178, 200-1.

<sup>3</sup>Not only women. T.H. Field, a Gosport solicitor, defending a lodging house keeper who had locked out his maid after she had gone out to look for another place, told the court: 'Most of us have suffered from the misconduct of servants. One would think they were masters and mistresses'. This seemed a compelling argument to the Portsmouth magistrates, who stopped the case, saying that the servant had no right to try and get her possessions, and indeed had herself used force in trying to gain access to them: H.T., 5 June 1867. E.P. Thompson has noted the familiarity of language of this sort in 'Sir, Writing by candlelight....', New Society, 24 Dec. 1970.

<sup>4</sup>H.T., 23 Feb. 1801 (another reference given to me by Mrs. P. Sharp). Rep. Lancasterian Institute, 1824, p. 4, Rep. Marines' Orphan School, 1856, p.6.

the wages of servants, except that they varied a good deal. (See Table Four). The highest was that paid by Captain Frederick Maitland to his butler; he received £50 a year, having started three and a half years earlier at £45; he presumably lived in.<sup>1</sup> The lowest was the £5 annually paid by Robert Reeves, a Southsea carpenter, to his maid<sup>2</sup>.

There was a hierarchy of servants, in which the most prestigious (butler, coachman) required considerable outlay; at the bottom came the general maidservants, perhaps even young girls who would come in and 'char' on a couple of days each week.

Expensive or not, servants could lead to domestic difficulties<sup>3</sup>. Despite the large female population, there was still some trouble in finding suitable maids. In Mansfield Park, Fanny Price was distressed by the servant that the Portsmouth fates inflicted upon her constantly-complaining mother, commenting that there is little chance of the yearly contract being renewed:

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. 23 June 1866. The butler might have been a recent addition to the household, for the 1851 census shows Maitland's home to include a boy, a groom, a cook, and four maids only.

<sup>2</sup>H.T. 26 Sept. 1863.

<sup>3</sup>See the dreadful revenge wreaked by a servant upon her master who had accused her of guzzling all the kidney juice, cited in Davidoff, 'Mastered for life', p. 426, n. 56.

'Her year!' cried Mrs. Price; 'I am sure I hope I shall be rid of her before she has staid a year, for that will not be up till November. Servants are come to such a pass, my dear, in Portsmouth, that it is quite a miracle if one keeps them more than half-a-year. I have no hope of ever being settled; and if I was to part with Rebecca, should only get something worse. And yet, I do not think I am a very difficult mistress to please - and I am sure the place is easy enough, for there is always a girl under her, and I often do half the work myself <sup>1</sup>.

The mother is by no means an agreeable character; but the context makes it clear that Jane Austen considers Portsmouth a likely place for someone to complain about the quality of their servants.

The quality of servants was, indeed, almost as important as the fact of having any in the first place. Servants had to perform a part in the complex theatre of daily manners and social occasions, and when they failed to learn their part, they embarrassed employer (and guests). An army officer recalled of one Southsea family:

A lady and her daughter, whose acquaintance we had made, and with whom we walked home, pressed us to 'come in and join their family dinner'. We accepted the invitation, but had to wait more than an hour before the dinner appeared. A boy in buttons waited at table but was evidently unaccustomed to such work. Everything, however, went on fairly until the boy brought in two dishes of tarts. The lady gazed at the tarts, and then, speaking to the boy, said, 'George, what are those?'

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<sup>1</sup>Book 3, ch. vii.

The boy, pointing first at one dish and then at the other, said, 'Them's two for a penny, them's two for three 'a-pence'. The boy had evidently been sent to the pastrycook round the corner to purchase something extra for the dinner, a fact that ought not to have been revealed 1.

The story was told as a joke; not only was the boy incompetent, but the lady had no cook; pretensions were stripped away, and the sordid reality revealed in the best Punch tradition. The higher the status of the family, the more the division of labour would be extended 'below stairs', so that each specialized function was allotted to one servant.

The number of servants employed by a family, then, is a good guide to its social status. In 1851, the census showed Portsmouth to have 3,139 female and 313 male servants; the largest category by far were female general domestics and charwomen. In comparison with Southampton, two points emerge (Table Five): first, Portsmouth had fewer servants per family than did Southampton, and second many more of Portsmouth's servants were charwomen who did not live in. This, remembering that Southampton was by far the wealthier town, is consistent with our assumption that wealth was manifested in servant-keeping. Moreover, almost a quarter of Portsmouth's domestic servants were employed by just one

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Times, 31 Mar. 1900.

per cent of the population; over eighty-five per cent had no servants at all. (Table Six).

In the ten per cent census sample, the largest number of servants employed by any single family was nine. The Prescott family (the father, Rear Admiral Sir Henry, was Superintendent of the Yard) had a butler, a footman, a coachman, a housekeeper, a cook, a lady's maid, and three housemaids. Their role was not purely decorative, nor would it have been limited to serving the Prescotts' sizeable family (there was the wife, four daughters - one married to a naval commander - and two grand-daughters). Like the other chief Government Officers, the Port Admiral and the Lieutenant Governor, the Yard Superintendent lived in an official residence. Their home was, in part, a public arena, where entertaining visitors was part of the daily round<sup>1</sup>. Fitzclarence, the Lieutenant Governor, had the most servants in the town though he did not appear in the ten per cent sample: he had sixteen. They were a housekeeper, a male cook, a butler, a footman, a postillion, a groom, and ten maids. The Port Admiral, Thomas Bladen Capel, also had sixteen domestics; eight were men, including a cook and a butler, and eight were women.

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<sup>1</sup>Davidoff, The best Circles, ch. ii. There were many officers in both services who had batmen, but these would have been returned in the census as soldiers, etc., not as servants.

TABLE FOUR: SERVANTS' WAGES, 1860-70

Year	Employer	Position	Annual Wage
1861	Prince of Wales Club	Manservant	£40 (no perks)
	ditto	Cook	£20 (no perks)
1863	R. Reeves, Carpenter	Maid	£5
1866	Captain Maitland	Butler	£45-50
1867	Terry, Poulterer	Maid	£7 16s.
1870	M. Kelly, Tax Surveyor	Maid	£11 11s.

Sources: Reports from County Court proceedings, H.T.  
 4 May 1861, 26 Sept. 1863, 23 June 1866,  
 23 Feb. 1867, 2 Nov. 1870.

TABLE FIVE: DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE SERVANTS IN PORTSMOUTH  
 AND SOUTHAMPTON, 1851

	Portsmouth	Southampton
Number	3,600	2,851
Percentage of Charwomen & launders	28.6	19.0
No. of servants per thousand of population	49.9	80.8

Source: 1851 census. Excluding inn-servants, nurses not domestics, and midwives.

TABLE SIX: PORTSMOUTH: DISTRIBUTION OF SERVANTS BY  
HOUSEHOLD, 1851

Number of servants	Number of households	Per cent of total servants
None	666	0.0
One	80	44.4
Two	27	30.0
Three or more	10	24.4
Total:	843	98.8

Source: Ten per cent sample of 1851 census schedules.

The chief government officers in the town represented the peaks of status, derived from official rather than economic position. Other office-holders, both in the Yard and in the armed forces, tended to be markedly less ostentatious in their life-styles. The working officers of the government industries in particular maintained relatively modest establishments. The Master Shipwright (John Fincham) made do with three housemaids for his official residence. The Storekeeper at Gun Wharf, Alexander Stewart, had two maids. Andrew Murray, the Chief Engineer, had a cook and two maids. At the lower levels, they were barely sustaining a bourgeois life-style at all: James Taplin, the master a congregationalist, had only one maid. These men could not hope to reach the levels that were considered the right, and perhaps duty, of the heads of the government departments. However, they were still among the top one per cent of Portsmouth families, comparing favourably with many of the most affluent cotton-masters of Lancashire<sup>1</sup>. The same is

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<sup>1</sup>Foster, op.cit., pp. 200-1.

true of many officers in the armed services. Captain Provo W.P. Wallis, who was on half pay, had a butler, a footman, a cook, a lady's maid, and two general female domestics (his house, rented from T.E. Owen, was assessed at £63). William Christy, a retired naval Paymaster, had a maid and a cook (his house, which Christy owned, was assessed at £64). Major General George Jones, R.M., had a footman, a cook and a maid (Owen leased the house, assessed at £85 per annum). Not all retired naval and military gentlemen were quite so fortunate: Richard Clarke, an Irish half-pay Purser, lived with his wife in Fratton among brewers' clerks and dockyardmen, with no servants at all. Although the status of officers was in general quite high, it was derived not only from the fact of holding office, but also from the traditional association of that office with the nobility and gentry; in part, its maintenance depended upon some sort of 'independent' income.

Businessmen varied enormously in their commitment to the genteel life-style that servant-keeping perhaps evoked. One can distinguish two groups who tended to employ servants: the Southsea-oriented elite, and the businessmen of the old commercial centres, around Queen Street and High Street. To take the Southsea oriented group first: Benjamin Bramble, the builder who was three times Mayor, had a cook, a coachman, and a maid. Thomas Owen had a cook, a page, a footman and a maid; Emanuel and Ezekiel Emanuel had three maids, and a cook, a maid and a nurse respectively. Then there were the



professionals and businessmen from the old townships:

Charles B. Hellard, a solicitor from High St., with four maids; Henry Grant, a merchant from High Street, with three maids; Joseph James Galt, the High Street tailor, had three maids. In Queen Street the younger Beldham had three maids and a housekeeper, while his father had two maids; Archibald Low, a solicitor from St. George's Square, employed three maids and a nurse; Samuel Allnutt, a chemist, had three maids.

Not all local businessmen, even when reasonably affluent, wanted to impress people by having servants. The manufacturers and retailers of Landport and the lesser streets of the old townships, seem to have employed few servants. Henry Childs, a master sailmaker from Broad Street, a councillor, guardian and eventually an alderman, apparently had none. William Purchase, another longstanding councillor, guardian and alderman, who had started life as a coal merchant and opened a brewery in 1834, lived on his own at Union Rd., Landport. David Levy, a slopseller from High Street, was also a councillor then an Alderman; like Childs and Purchase, he was an 'economist', employing no servants; yet he owned property in High Street, Oyster Street, and St. Thomas Street. William Bilton, a retired chemist and one-time Chartist sympathiser during his long council career, rented his Landport home for an estimated £17 per annum and employed one maid; he had been Borough chamberlain since 1849 and rented his old shop to Timothy White for (according to the rate books) £68 a year. The small manufacturers and traders of Landport and the old townships seem to have rejected the life-style and culture of the affluent, even when they could afford it.

Thus another small master from High Street, David Brent Price, who lived next door to the Meredith family (who were showy and dependent upon genteel patronage if anyone was), denounced the Liberal Mayor in 1840 for 'driving about all Sunday, in that pretty little pill box of yours, with the aristocratic pretence of a servant in livery attached to it'.<sup>1</sup> These men took a dim view of domestic servants, regarding them as an outward sign of hypocrisy and pretension to genteel status. Small masters and traders were proud of their work, placing themselves among the industrious and not the idle classes.

The true idle classes, the real oisifs, were the Southsea-based rentiers and fundholders. Sir John Morris, of Southsea House, had two maids and a cook; Lord George Lennox had three maids and two manservants. Domestic service was most common in Southsea, of course, where 'carriage folk' may well have outnumbered the rest, at least in some streets of detached villas with a couple of acres of garden apiece. Prosperity definitely did not depend upon the sweat that dripped from your brow. An unemployed vicar, the Reverend Francis Saunders, who rented a house in Portland Terrace from T.E. Owen

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<sup>1</sup>The Mayor at the time was John Wesley Williams, a surgeon. Semaphore, 1 June 1840. Price laid information before the JPs that Williams was using his servants on Sundays for professional purposes; he lost the case, but got W.J. Hay, a chemist, fined 5s. for selling a cigar on the Sabbath: H.T. 5 Oct. 1840.

(assessed at £76 a year), managed to find work for a house-keeper, a butler, a cook and a maid. Such styles were not universal among the Southsea oisifs, however, depending fairly directly upon the length of your pocket or the elasticity of your credit. Abraham Brooks, nominally a 'Proprietor of Houses' (according to the census) lived in Norfolk Street, Southsea; he, however had no servants - despite the fact that his son, who lived with him, was an attorney (presumably with very few cases to handle).

There are, then, several distinctive groups of affluent citizens who were likely to have servants. These were the Southsea rentiers, the businessmen and professionals of the older townships who relied largely on upper-class customers, and the officials of the government services and industries. In this spectrum of affluent occupations, the largest servant-employers were obviously the officers who headed the three chief government departments: the Lieutenant Governor, the Port Admiral, and the Dockyard Superintendent (any one of which might count royalty among his official guests). Their purpose was partly ornamental, partly instrumental; but either way, they helped to contribute to one possible, but extremely widely-held, definition of the status hierarchy. Servants were, or they became, an integral part of the bourgeois home.

Any reader of Victorian fiction knows that the home was a potent symbol for contemporaries. It carried innumerable connotations, revolving around feelings of peace, harmony,

love and contentment. For Eric Hobsbawm, indeed, the 'home was the quintessential bourgeois world', functioning as an obedient surrogate for the turbulent world outside: 'in it, and only in it, could the problems and contradictions of his society be forgotten or artificially eliminated'<sup>1</sup>.

The privacy of the home was carefully guarded, with guests permitted entry only upon specified terms (by invitation, unless you were a close acquaintance) and at specified times (most notably, during the 'At Home'). This privacy was part of the home's value in providing the menfolk with an island of peace and quiet, cut off from the stresses of urban business life. Certain images recur: the 'bosom' of the family, the hearth, the sense of absolute ownership (expressed in the famous saying about the Englishman's home). Yet the 'island' status of the home makes it highly problematic for the historian.

The main sources used here are fiction, autobiography, and occasional stories of courtships. None of these is especially reliable. Even when it is supposedly drawn from personal experience, fiction is written in such a way that narrative, style, plot, and structure cannot really be separated. Certain things will be played up, others played down, to suit the novelist's purpose. Autobiography is also structured around a narrative, presenting as mediated a picture of

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<sup>1</sup>Age of Capital, p.270.

'reality' as fiction. Even a diary can be written with one eye to one's children (or, if you are a politician, one eye and a pair of fingers are turned towards the publishers). The tales that one can pick up of Victorian courtships come from a variety of sources, but nearly all have made their way into the records because they were unusual - often because they were thought amusing. Moreover, the sources are so disparate that it is hard to know what to make of them. These are, then, unpromising grounds upon which to improvise a set of intuitions about Victorian family life. The only alternative to these flimsy materials, however, is to ignore the personal dimension entirely<sup>1</sup>.

Sir Walter Besant's fiction illustrates these difficulties. His novel By Celia's Arbour (written jointly with James Rice) contains a number of passages which, according to the author, are based upon his own experiences of growing up in Portsmouth; moreover, it is set in Portsmouth<sup>2</sup>. None the less the Portsmouth passages belong to an overall structure, and are partly subordinated to that structure. The story involves a combination of adventure and romance; Celia Tyrell, the

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<sup>1</sup>There are some insights, from different angles, in E. Zeretsky, Capitalism and Personal Life, 1977; E. Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family, 1977. Most attention has been devoted to Shorter's book, e.g. reviews by R.T. Vann in Journal of Family History, 1, 1975, pp. 106-17; by L. Stone, Times Literary Supplement, 28 May 1976.

<sup>2</sup>Autobiography, p.21.

eponymous heroine, has to be wooed and won by one Leonard Coplestone. Celia is the daughter of a bigwig and solicitor; Coplestone is an orphan who runs away to join the army, and is commissioned for his bravery in the field; he rises to the rank of captain, returning home to find that his long-dead father was really a gentleman; thus, he is free to marry Celia. The purpose of the descriptions of local middle class domestic life is, it seems to me, the contrast that is drawn as against the sinister German spy who pops up from time to time, with the intellectual sensitivity of the narrator (a crippled Polish musician), and with the fresh strength and forcefulness of Coplestone. The picture is as partisan as that of William Saunders (cit. on p. 176):

A certain conventionality hung about every act of family life which was, or might be, public. People pretended a great deal. If a visitor called - I speak from information received, and not from my own experience - the work which the young ladies were engaged upon was put aside hastily, and they were presented, on the rising of the curtain, so to speak, reading in graceful attitudes. There was a fiction that callers required refreshment, and the decanters were placed on the table, with the choice of 'red or white'.... The duration of a visit was inversely proportional to the rank of the caller. In the case of 'carriage company', a quarter of an hour at the outside was granted, so much at least being needed to impress the street. Humbler friends, in whose case the decanters might be speedily put away and the needlework resumed, could stay a whole afternoon, if they pleased. On Wednesday and Friday evenings, those ladies who could boast of having 'experienced' religion went to church, and gave themselves little airs on account of superior spirituality.... The handling of the muffins, the dexterous use of the kettle, the division of the cake at tea, the invitation to hot spirits and water after supper, the request to sing, the management of the album: all these things required grace and deportment; quite young men went through the prescribed duties with manifest

anxiety; young ladies were careful not to allow their natural happiness over a little social excitement to interfere with the exigencies of propriety; middle aged men took a pride in saying and doing exactly the right thing in the right way. Everything in bourgeois society had a right way....we all knew what to expect, were able to criticise the performance, afterwards, of a well-known role, and to congratulate ourselves on the very proper way in which everybody had behaved 1.

Is it an accurate description?

The question is not easily answered. In his biography, Besant said of his youth that 'In recalling those days it is difficult to separate them from the imaginary characters in my novel, *By Celia's Arbour*'<sup>2</sup>. Besant clearly did experience the bourgeois life-style of Victorian Portsmouth: his father, William Besant, was a wine merchant and insurance agent of 11½ Union Street, Portsea, and it is possible that earlier he had been a staymaker or that his own father, Walter's grandfather, was one<sup>3</sup>. Besant sees the world of his youth as artificial, and even theatrical, and wants to distance himself from it to some degree; yet his obvious distaste for the mores and manners of early Victorian provincial life does not of itself invalidate the description. In the absence of evidence that life then was not like this, Besant's fictional

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<sup>1</sup>Pp. 60-2.

<sup>2</sup>P. 40.

<sup>3</sup>The 1832 poll book gives one William Besant of St. George's Square, a staymaker; see also P.T. 31 Mar. 1900. This can hardly have been the grandfather, who was described in the autobiography as a civil servant; Henry Besant, a tax inspector, lived in St. George's Square (Pigot's Commercial Directory, 1830).

evidence will have to be accepted.

By Celia's Arbour points to the display (the theatre) that took up so much time and trouble for the bourgeois family. The 'artificiality' of this life as experienced by so many young Victorian writers may have some basis in material conditions: given that customary demarcations of status were under challenge, it should not surprise us that outward behaviour should assume so much prominence in helping people who were concerned about status to 'place' one another. Not only were there more opportunities for men of non-inherited economic and social position to rise to prominence at the national level, so also did urbanization mean that in any given locality the number of non-landed members of the bourgeoisie grew considerably. New ways of establishing status which were appropriate to the town-dwelling affluent strata emerged; on the whole, these concerned achievement and personal behaviour rather than descent.

A more reticent picture of family life emerges from the diary of James Richard Cox, a baker who moved from Havant to Gosport in 1859 then to Portsea in 1863. Cox was an example of the upward social mobility that was possible in some of Portsmouth's smaller-scale trades; working as an assistant or journeyman until 1864, he then tried to set up on his own account, but was forced after two year's trading to return to a wage for eight months to replenish his capital. He married a Havant girl (indeed, as a young man most of his spare time was taken up with walking to Havant to see 'my fair lady', a distance of



some sixteen miles all round), and at times of family crisis - as when his wife fell ill- it was to the parents at Havant that 'the Coxes turned. Yet Cox barely pays any attention to his home life in the diary<sup>1</sup>; family life, unless interrupted by illness, was taken for granted (as it was not by Besant, a much more critical thinker). There was a known and established routine, broken only by births, deaths, and marriages: after a fatal explosion in Long's brewery, Cox brooded over 'The awful uncertainty of life, and the necessity of being always prepared for the last great change, which sooner or later comes to each one of us'<sup>2</sup>. For Cox (and in this he was unlike almost every Victorian novelist<sup>3</sup>) what had to be written down in the diary concerned work, not the family; he also wrote occasionally of his activities in the Freemasons and attendance at Church, to both of which he attached importance.

For Cox, as for many others, the family was probably something of a haven from the world of work (although the two overlapped: in Cox's case, the brother-in-law looked after the shop when he went to Chichester in December 1870; and in an

<sup>1</sup>'Diary of a Southsea Tradesman', ed. S. Pzacock, *op.cit.*

<sup>2</sup>Entry for 29 Mar., 1870. For a contrasting attitude to death see the obituary of the Rev. John Shoveller, H.T. 4 Jan. 1851; he, it seems, was greatly looking forward to his 'approaching translation'.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. E. Owen, 'The elusive middle class', English, xxvi, 1977, pp. 76-81.

age of family businesses, the economic functions of kinship were often formidable). It was a sanctuary to which Dickens could be paternally admitted as 'safe family reading', the local Times pointed out when it greeted Household Words:

We are always glad to see upon our library table a new work from Charles Dickens; for unequal in excellence as many of his productions are, they severally have merit, while many of them are distinguished by rare excellence, and none of them offend against morals. Their universal freedom from this stain, renders all of them safe family reading <sup>1</sup>.

Once more, the image of the family is as a closed protective unit. Indeed, as Besant recognised, all entry to the family shelter was supposed to follow fairly strict rules. The tenderest spot, and the most vulnerable, was the marriage of the daughters, which supposedly had nothing to do with sexuality, and only followed upon a lengthy courtship, with parental approval, and carefully supervised contact between the couple. What we know tends to come from cases that, somehow, went wrong, and brought about moral or legal sanctions that were then reported elsewhere. I have been able to find three detailed instances.

The first was in 1818, involving one Lieutenant Capel of the R.M. and the daughter of the Revd. Mr. Tyner of Sussex, who had brought his family on a visit to Portsmouth, where they developed a relationship of some sort with the Lieutenant.

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Times, 6 Apr. 1850.

Capel, however, subsequently became 'very mysterious'; Mr. Tyner complained that he was never 'able to visit Portsmouth with his family, without Lt. Capels watching him and his Familys [sic] movements in every direction, secreting himself in bye Places and Corners, so to do, at unseasonable hours of the Night, to molest the quiet of his Family, and to keep him in a perpetual state of Alarm, from his very equivocal conduct'<sup>1</sup>. Tyner returned to his home, but was unable to prevent the couple engaging in a 'clandestine correspondence', which so alarmed the vicar that he placed his daughter in a Gosport lunatic asylum; Lieut. Capel broke in, trying to bribe the asylum keeper's son; he later broke in for a second time, sending one female patient 'quite delirious for some days'. At the court of inquiry, Capel explained his conduct as the result of strong emotional involvement, and told the court that he wished 'to unite my fate with hers, which will be the happiest circumstance of my existence'<sup>2</sup>. Whether or not he did marry the unfortunate Miss Tyner is unrecorded.

The second case comes from 1830, and involves a surgeon (Mr. Cooper) and a 45-year old widow from Marine Terrace, Southsea (Mrs. E.H. Bunning).<sup>3</sup> What is interesting here is

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<sup>1</sup>Rep. of 20 Feb. 1818, Portsmo R.M. Station to Admiralty, P.R.O. ADM 1/3298.

<sup>2</sup>The court took a dim view of Capel's 'entering the Lunatic Asylum in an irregular & clandestine way', and felt that this was unmanly and therefore unbecoming; he was placed on permanent half pay.

<sup>3</sup>P.P.G. Herald, 26 Feb. 1830. This is a report of a breach of promise case.

the attitude of the local press; the Herald regarded the affair as completely hilarious, printing in full several letters between the couple, and drawing attention to such details as the evidence of growing intimacy contained in Mrs. Dunning's addressing Cooper as 'My Dear Sir' in November 1828 and 'My own dear love' in May 1829:

When we consider the youth and inexperience of the parties [Cooper was 60], and their consequent liability to the most sensitive feelings of our nature we cannot wonder at the warmth of those terms with which the fair lady expressed her tender sentiments; nor can we wonder at the powerful impression created by them on the susceptible and unpractical heart of her youthful admirer. Their mutual partiality for the intellectual recreation of cribbage and all-fours, tended to induce that attachment which a few romantic walks on the Common Hard, with various moonlight rambles amongst the Flat Houses [i.e. along the Mile End mudflats], and sentimental wanderings to the soft solitudes of Lump's Fort, conspired to ripen into a fervour of devotedness, but which was ultimately annihilated by the fickleness and inconstancy of Mrs. E.H. Bunning.

Cooper was awarded £140 in damages.

In 1854 Frank Pierce, a solicitor's clerk, fell in love with the daughter of a Queen Street draper named John Franckeiss<sup>1</sup>. This case came to light because Franckeiss' daughter was only fourteen and the father objected to the courtship rather too strenuously. Pierce's pursuit of the young girl had included the sending of a fancy lace note, a book and a five-stanza poem:

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 21 Jan. 1854.

Signs unbidden steal, I know not why,  
Nor why my soul's depressed;  
Thy name itself brings forth a sigh,  
That throbs my faithful breast.

It is not grief, it is not care  
That preys upon my mind;  
'Tis love for thee, that throbbing there,  
Thou dearest of thy kind.

'Tis nature that telling my heart  
That thou must be mine,  
With parents and sisters thou must part,  
To be my wife in time.

Then let us thus our hours beguile,  
With love in all its softest charms;  
This will repay the lawyer's toil,  
Encircled thus in beauty's arms.

Thus may our loves for ever flow,  
Free from ills of every kind;  
Every blessing may we know,  
Health, joy, and peace of mind.

Franckeiss went to Devereux' office in St Mary Street,  
grabbed Pierce and spat in his face; the magistrates agreed  
that he had been provoked, but nonetheless had to fine him  
20s. for the assault.

Each of these stories says something about the way Victorians  
perceived the courtship process. One point to emerge is the  
centrality of the paterfamilias in sustaining the notion of  
the family as a haven: disruptive influences were not merely  
filtered out, they were if necessary forced out. Thus the  
Rev. Mr Tyner felt it his right to place his daughter in an  
asylum, largely on the grounds that she had been responding  
to Lieut. Capel's advances. John Franckeiss felt it his  
right to physically attack the intrusive Pierce, and the  
magistrates had some sympathy with that view. Access to the  
family was permitted only to social intimates, and conferred

obligations upon both partners and their relatives. Even those who in other respects deviated from 'normal' courtship practices seem to have accepted the view of the family as a shelter: Pierce, for instance, defined 'Every blessing' as 'Health, joy, and peace of mind', and clearly saw these as the essence of happy marriage. His offence was to challenge the authority of the paterfamilias.

Secondly, it seems to have been recognized that the primary purpose of love was biological. You had families so that you had children, and the family was the appropriate place in which to bring up a child in the proper manner. The case of Cooper and Bunning was interesting chiefly for the ridicule that the attachment between the couple attracted. Couples too old to have children did not fall in love like that. The implication also is that a certain loss of the normal mental powers during courtship was to be expected; but the experience of marriage and life ought to make one slightly cynical about such matters. Gentlemen of sixty and ladies of fortyfive did not lose their heads over one another; if they did, there was something ridiculous about it.

The family, lastly, was somewhere that enabled the man to relax, 'With love in all its softest charms... Encircled thus in beauty's arms'. The rarity of detailed, thoughtful accounts of the courtship process is itself highly indicative, as is the fact that most of the accounts that do exist, exist simply because a breakdown in the normal proceedings laid open a small part of the courtship. Otherwise the family was the

sacred heart of the closed, private world of the bourgeoisie when at home<sup>1</sup>.

Whom you allowed to marry into your family, or (if you were a man) perhaps whom you would decide to marry, was therefore a problem. In the Victorian period above all, marriage contacts provide an index of (and were themselves a reflection and cause of) social closeness, or distance, between social groups<sup>2</sup>. Foster, Gray, and Crossick, have all been able to produce illuminating answers to the question of who married whom by studying marriage registers. This may be adequate for studying working class groups, but is less likely to produce results for the bourgeoisie. First, the numbers will be much smaller; here I have been able to take only Anglican marriages over two five year periods (1845-9, 1865-9), and have ended up with some very small categories indeed. Second, occupational categorization may be harder: if a man is entered as a shoemaker in the register, unless you possess other information about him you do not know whether he is a workman or a master. Third, although the occupational categories may tell us something about the propensity of different groups to form communities, it is likely that differentiation within

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<sup>1</sup>R. Williams, The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, 1975, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Foster, op.cit.; D. Crozier, 'Kinship and occupational succession', Sociological Review, xiii, 1965, pp. 15-43.

occupational groups will be more important for the bourgeoisie than for the working class<sup>1</sup>.

In terms of research strategy, I have tried to minimize these awkward problems by taking only selected occupations (see p. 235, organized into broader groups. Nevertheless, there are undoubtedly cases where men have been placed into the wrong category simply because the occupational description is misleading (e.g. 'draper', which might mean an assistant as well as master draper), or because it is so heterogeneous (e.g. 'shopkeeper'). This still left 233 marriages in the later 'forties, 347 in the later 'sixties. Treating the results with caution, and full of hope that the periods chosen have produced representative results, it is reasonable to search them for possible generalizations.

Only two groups mixed much with working class people: clerical workers and retailers (most of the 'professionals' marrying skilled men or their daughters were teachers). Of the clerical groups marrying in both periods, one third to one half married daughters of working- or servicemen. Clerks were less likely to let their daughters marry a workman, but in the 'sixties they were prepared to accept some servicemen<sup>2</sup>. A number of clerks also married into the

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<sup>1</sup>As Gray reminds us, divisions within occupations and not just between them, were not unimportant in the working class, and were part of the process by which an 'aristocratic' stratum was formed; op.cit., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps this is an index of the growing 'respectability' of many soldiers and sailors, as well as their acceptance in the community: see O. Anderson, 'The growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain', English Historical Review lxxxvi, 1971, pp. 46-72.



TABLE SEVEN: NUMBERS OF GROOMS IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, MARRYING DAUGHTERS OF ALL OCCUPATIONS, 1845-49.

Grooms (N=)	Prof.	Clerical	Retail	Commerce	Industr.	Managerial	Independent	Farming	Skilled worker	Semi-skilled worker	Unskilled worker	Serviceman	Not Known
Professional (53)	32	1	2				7	1	8	1		1	
Clerical (28)	5	1	6		2	1	1	2	5		1	3	1
Industrialist (0)													
Commercial (10)	2		1	2	1		2	1	1				
Retailers (111)	5	2	22	1	7	1	11	6	26	7	14	9	
Managerial (6)		1	1			1			1		2		
Independent (25)	9		5			2	1	2	3	1		2	

TABLE SEVEN (b) : SELECTED OCCUPATIONS OF BRIDES' FATHERS, MARRYING GROOMS OF ALL OCCUPATIONS, 1845-49.

Brides' Fathers (N=)	Professional	Clerical	Industrial- ist	Mercantile	Retailer	Managerial	Independent	Farming	Skilled worker	Semi-skilled worker	Unskilled worker	Serviceman
Professional (49)	27	3			4		5	1	5	1	3	
Clerical (10)	1	2			1			1	1	2		2
Industrialist (1)		1										
Commercial (4)			3	1								
Retail (131)	24	2	1	2	22		3	2	25	13	9	28
Managerial (17)					2	1	2		9	1		2
Independent (32)	11	1		2	11		1	3	1	1		1

TABLE EIGHT: NUMBER OF GROOMS IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, MARRYING THE DAUGHTERS  
OF ALL OCCUPATIONS, 1865-69.

Grooms (N=)	Professional	Clerical	Industrialist	Commercial	Retailer	Managerial	Independent	Farming	Skilled worker	Semi-skilled worker	Unskilled worker	Serviceman	Not known
Professional (107)	38	1	3	5	10	2	26	2	8	2	2	6	2
Clerical (59)	8		3		10	4	5	1	14	4	1	9	
Industrialist (2)		1	1										
Commercial (12)	3			3	1		3	1	1				
Retailer (136)	3	5	10	1	33	3	7	10	35	7	7	12	3
Managerial (3)	1		1						1				
Independent (28)	6	1	1	1	2		8	3	2	1	1	1	

TABLE EIGHT (b): NUMBER OF BRIDES' FATHERS IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, MARRYING GROOMS  
OF ALL OCCUPATIONS, 1865-69.

Brides' Fathers (N=)	Professional	Clerical	Industrial- ist	Commercial	Retail	Managerial	Independent	Farming	Skilled worker	Semi-skilled worker	Unskilled worker	Serviceman
Professional (75)	38	8		1	4	1	6	1	7	2		7
Clerical (25)	1		1		6		1		5	1		10
Industrialist (0)												
Commercial (12)	6			3	2		1					
Retail (154)	9	6	1	1	24			2	36	20	7	47
Managerial (19)	3	4			4				6	1		1
Independent (79)	27	4	1	5	12		8	2	12	3		5



## OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION: MARRIAGE REGISTER ANALYSIS

### A/ OCCUPATIONS SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

Professional Schoolteacher, Surveyor, Dentist, Architect, Clergyman (all denominations), Officer in Army, Navy, East India Company, Egyptian Navy, Solicitor, Attorney, Barrister, Surgeon, Physician, Accountant.

Clerical Tax collector, railway clerk, Clerk, Parish Clerk, Admiralty Clerk, Relieving Officer, Sexton, Vestry clerk, Civil servant, Contractor's clerk, merchant's clerk, banker's clerk, Baker's clerk, builder's clerk, attorney's clerk.

Retailing Auctioneer, Purveyor, Hotelier, China dealer, Victualler, Dealer, Grocer, Draper, Innkeeper, Pawnbroker, Harness broker, Ironmonger, Druggist, Timber Merchant, Provisions merchant, Chemist, Marine Stores Dealer, Corn dealer, Corn Factor, Hemp dealer, Beer retailer, Spirit Merchant.

Mercantile Wool Merchant, Banker, Merchant, Shipping Agent, Ship owner.

Managerial Masters of the Dock Yard or Ordnance, Inspectors and Storekeepers of the Yard or Ordnance, Foremen in the Yard or Ordnance, Secretary to the Admiral Superintendent, Clerk of Works RE, Lighthouse Inspector, Railway Superintendent.

Independent Gentleman, Esquire, Independent.

### B/ CLASSIFICATION OF CONTINGENT OCCUPATIONS

Professional Purser RN, Master RN, Estate Agent, Musician (father an architect), Chief Engineer RN, Merchant Navy Officers.

Clerical Excise officer, Writer in Dockyard.

Retailing Hairdresser, Tailor (divided 50% with skilled W/C), Breeches maker, Master Baker, Commercial Traveller, Seed Merchant, Perfumer, Factor.

Mercantile Hop merchant, Broker.

Managerial Bailiff.

Industrialist Newspaper publisher, Master Brewer, Brick Manufacturer, Master Ironfounder, Master Dyer, Builder, Master Shipbuilder.

Farming Yeoman, Nurseryman, Miller, Farmer, Cattle Dealer.

Skilled Working Class Sailmaker, Timber convertor, blockmaker, Engineer, Engineer RN, Joiner, Tailor (50%), French Polisher, Millwright, Turner. Gunsmith, Cabinet maker, Carpenter, Shipwright, Mason, Confectioner, Shoemaker, Cordwainer, Miller's journeyman, Thatcher, Printer, Carpenter RN, pilot, Gas tube maker, Boilermaker, Blacksmith, Coachsmith, Whitesmith, Engine fitter, Engraver, Baker, Hatter, Papermaker, Brassfounder, Caulker, Ropemaker, Ribbon maker, Pastrycook, Cooper, Butler, Saddler, Railway driver, Canvas maker, Tanner, Master marriner, Mate (mercantile).

Semi-skilled Working Class Rigger, Painter, Marriner, Waterman, Coachman, Musician (father a boatswain), Railway guard, Shepherd, Plumber, Bricklayer, tinman, waiter, shopman, drayman, staymaker, policeman, sawyer, warehouseman, bridgekeeper, tallow chandler, gardener, lime burner, servant, groom, carman, postman, chimney sweep, plasterer, cork-cutter, dairyman, paviour.

Unskilled Working Class Labourer, Hawker, Porter.

Serviceman Seaman, Marine, Soldier, Pensioner, Coastguard, Convict Warder.

retailing group. Retailers themselves seem to have been strongly linked to the working class, both culturally and economically (cf. pp. 99-100): in the 'forties and 'sixties, roughly half the retailers married girls from working class homes, although by the sixties such marriages were more likely to involve the daughters of skilled men than was the case in the forties. Retailers' daughters were even more likely to marry non-middle class men, although in their case a soldier or a sailor was likely to be a popular choice. The clear preference for a serviceman among retailers' daughters is probably a simple result of opportunities for meeting one another, especially among the daughters of publicans or beersellers in this group.

At the top of the scale, a few retailers' daughters or young retailers found spouses from families whose background was farming or who had independent means. The independent group in particular seems itself to have been somewhat heterogeneous, for in the sixties a number of brides from this group married skilled workers. Possibly this phenomenon was linked to the existence of a small but possibly growing number of retired people, living on annuities, and placing 'Gent.' after their names. More interesting is the marked preference of both grooms and brides for intermarriage with members of professional families; and there is also some evidence of links between the independent families and the farming interest (although perhaps this evidence is weaker than one might expect). On



the whole, though, this group looked for its marriage partners from within its own ranks, and this was a tendency that increased over time, as Southsea grew, accompanied perhaps by an awareness of the inferiority of 'trade'.

Mercantile, managerial and above all industrial groups appear in too small a number to show much of a pattern. Managers, most of whom were Yard officers, often found their brides from among the daughters of the bourgeoisie - perhaps because, as young men, the Yard offices had a secure career ahead of them. Managers' daughters, however (and especially the daughters of inferior Yard offices) often found husbands among the skilled workforce. All that one can say about the mercantile group is that there is unmistakeable evidence of marriage within the group, and some less reliable evidence that the independent group and the professionals formed the second most likely areas of choice. These social contacts would have arisen out of, and probably helped to cement, the alliances and friendships formed through the world of business.

The professional group are probably the easiest to discuss. Firstly, they tended to marry overwhelmingly within their own ranks, and they encouraged their daughters to marry professional men. It is possible that the professionals' apparent exclusiveness may have declined over this period, since the rate of intra-group marriage among grooms halved between the 'forties and the 'sixties (see Table Nine). The decline in intra-group marriage was especially marked

among army and navy officers, who increasingly sought their spouses elsewhere and obviously found many of them in the independent group. Two distinct processes seem to have been at work. One affected the civilian professions, who may have found themselves more widely accepted in bourgeois society than they had been in the 'forties. The other affected the officers, who no doubt found that the growth of Southsea provided them with a place where they could meet suitable young ladies.

The marriage registers, then, seem to show that there were distinct groups within the bourgeoisie, one of which embraced professional men and especially officers, and the independent ladies and gentlemen;<sup>the</sup> other included the retailers, and the Yard managers seem to have formed a group on their own, not highly integrated into the town bourgeoisie. These findings are consistent with the discussion of leisure activities that took up most of the rest of this chapter: the public dinners, the dances, the volunteer movement, cricketing. Cricketing and dancing were activities that often attracted the younger, and sometimes not so young, members of the 'Southsea elite' - a definition that is probably not much preciser than an occupational one, but that is still probably less misleading. Dinners could be used for a variety of purposes, but when one was held in 1850 to celebrate the unity of town and aristocracy, it was disrupted by ill-feeling between the two groups. The volunteer movement did attract some of the Southsea elite, but primarily for purposes of personal status enhancement; by participating in it, they attracted the

contempt or ridicule of the officers who so often supported them, and of the small businessmen of Landport and the townships who did not.

The picture is not always harmonious; there is rivalry, snobbery, jealousy, and even outright division. Perhaps historians' concentration upon the struggles that might surround popular 'leisure' pursuits in this period has led them to over-estimate the cosiness and consensus of bourgeois culture<sup>1</sup>; as I hope I have shown, the cosiness was probably limited to the family, and even then only to certain members of it - the servants were excluded, for a start. Indeed, the cosiness of the family, the sense that it formed a safe haven, was probably in some part ideological. Geoffrey Best has described urban culture as follows:

The recreational and entertainment side of the mid-Victorian town thus for the most part seems to defy strict presentation in terms of social or economic class. . . it must have functioned to some extent as yet another of those common grounds for members of different social and economic groups which characterised social relations during our period and helped to keep them, relatively speaking, sweet 2.

The sweetness was all behind the closed doors of the home; outside them, it may well have been present but if it was, this was probably because certain sections of the bourgeoisie

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<sup>1</sup>See the conference of the Society for the Study of Labour History, mentioned on p. 198 above.

<sup>2</sup>MidVictorian Britain, 1851-75, 1971, pp. 221-2.

were excluded or uninterested in the activity concerned; if the activity was open, attracting a wide range of participants, then sweetness was by no means guaranteed.

If social class connected with the cultural patterns under discussion, it did so in ways that are not easy to identify. It can be said that on the whole these activities did form part of the culture of part of a class. Businessmen from the town did start to accept Southsea's claims to cultural prominence; some invested their money in it, and some retired there, such as Erasmus Jackson the banker or Benjamin Bramble the builder. On the whole, rich men did employ servants to carry out the dirtier jobs in their homes, and they made their daughters marry the sons of other rich men. What has to be remembered, however, is that particularly in a town with a small-scale economy like Portsmouth, the class structure was less clear-cut than in, say, Manchester. There was a distinctive stratum of small businessmen, whose cultural allegiances were not necessarily determined by a desire to mark themselves off from their employees below. They were just as keen to assert their value (as 'industrious', or as 'independent') in comparison to the idle drones above them in the social hierarchy. The tensions created by this stratum of small masters and traders affected the content of what might be described (with some crudeness and elision) as high bourgeois culture: it meant that its status in the eyes of some of its own adherents was sometimes uncertain, and that it often had

to be careful who was admitted to the gate. Equally, the presence of a number of army and navy officers had its impact. Activities such as dancing probably assumed a greater importance in defining status among the 'high bourgeoisie' (such as it was), and the culture of the Southsea elite as a whole developed a certain aristocratic tone.

## CHAPTER SIX: POLITICS AND THE PARTIES

It would be easy to enter the world of Portsmouth's politics in these years by ringing the bell of the 'age of reform'. The two great reform acts of the nineteenth century, especially that of 1832, had a tremendous effect on the way the town was represented; the 1835 Municipal Corporation Act may have made an even profounder impact on local political patterns. There is no doubt that political loyalties shifted: at the beginning of our period the town was represented by a Whig oligarchy, in which the Carter family was dominant; by the end of it, after an interlude of Liberal predominance, the Conservatives were clearly in the ascendant, feeding from expressions of popular Toryism that, from 1867, increasingly made their mark upon parliamentary, as well as local politics.

The pattern of events falls neatly into place around the chronology of reform: before 1832 things were thus, after 1867. . . . Yet there were other shifts which may be of equal interest, and of equal importance, to the transition from Whig oligarchy to Tory populism. Equally, there were other features in the political landscape than the Reform Acts, working below the surface to produce their own effects, short and long term. Just as the period saw the 'rise of democracy', viewed in terms of the formal electoral proceedings surrounding municipal and parliamentary government, so it also saw the removal of older powers from local

participatory bodies like the vestry or improvements commission<sup>1</sup>. The newer local authorities - Town Council, Board of Guardians<sup>2</sup> - retained an important number of discretionary powers, but the underlying tendencies showed something in common with the process that Max Weber described as 'bureaucratization' and 'rationalization', defined primarily in idealist terms<sup>3</sup>.

Why did the twin processes of 'bureaucratization' and 'rationalization' arise when and where they did? The answers to this question are likely to be various, and may draw our attention to political traditions<sup>4</sup>, as well as to the new social relations entailed by the development of an industrial society. Even more important, in my view, were the material and ideological problems paved by the growth of urban areas. There had never, before the nineteenth century, been more than a handful of towns of any size: at the start of the eighteenth, only three English towns - London, Norwich and Bristol - had over 20,000 inhabitants,

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<sup>1</sup>D. Fraser, Urban Politics in Victorian England, Leicester, 1976.

<sup>2</sup>Discussed in Chapter VIII, below.

<sup>3</sup>Weber, op.cit., ch. viii.

<sup>4</sup>These are usefully summarized in J. Cannon, Parliamentary Reform, 1640-1832, 1973.

and almost ninety per cent of the nation's population lived on the land or in villages. Even in 1801 only eighteen English towns had over 20,000 inhabitants, and seventy per cent of the population still lived outside towns altogether<sup>1</sup>. By then , the urban population was obviously on the increase, and its continued growth presented nineteenth century administrators with problems that would have seemed barely imaginable to most of their eighteenth century equivalents. The problems - of government, sanitation, poor relief, social order, housing, policing - were only exacerbated by parallel changes in the role and social structures of the towns. Urbanization was less frequently the product of local agricultural needs, and more frequently associated with the growth and concentration of specialized industrial, commercial, administrative, communications and retailing activities. Partly as a consequence of growing specialization and concentration, each town tended to become increasingly more heterogeneous in terms of its class structure, as wealthy factors, merchants and manufacturers and poorer wage workers replaced earlier, less differentiated social patterns<sup>2</sup>.

Portsmouth conformed to these general trends, although it obviously showed distinctive features of its own. Above all, it was an early starter, both in terms of growth and in terms

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<sup>1</sup>See G.D.H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People 1746-1946, 1961, p. 451; R.K. Webb, Modern England from the 18th Century to the Present (1969), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>One useful recent discussion is J. Merrington, 'Town and Country in the Transition to Capitalism', New Left Review xciii, 1975, pp. 71-92. There is also a stimulating discussion in P. Borsay, 'The English Urban Renaissance, c. 1680 - 1760', Social History, 1977.



of its specialised socio-economic structure. Only nine English towns were larger in 1801, when Portsmouth had a population of 33,000<sup>1</sup>. Its very existence, as a large town, was due to its specialized economic function, which had in turn given it a sizeable population of wage-workers. The problems of urban government were hardly new for Portsmouth in the nineteenth century, and this marked off the town's experience from that of newer industrial centres like Bradford or Barnsley. Portsmouth entered the years of reform with a wide range of local authorities with settled functions; although many of these had a fair degree of local autonomy, most were in some way overseen by the Corporation, itself dominated by the Carter family.

#### 1. The Closed Borough

Daniel Howard, an attorney strongly attached to the Carter group, was only one of those who were impressed with the antiquity of the Corporation's standing<sup>2</sup>. Charles I had granted the town the charter under which it was governed, allowing for a Corporate body of twelve Aldermen and an unlimited number of burgesses. It was hardly the powerless body that it has sometimes been represented<sup>3</sup>. It was responsible for collecting wharfage dues, harbour dues,

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<sup>1</sup>These were London, Manchester (with Salford), Liverpool, Bristol, Leeds, Birmingham, Sheffield, Norwich, and Plymouth (with Devonport).

<sup>2</sup>Witness his projected history, cit.

<sup>3</sup>S. Peacock says that it was 'moribund', but gives an impressive list of functions: 'Borough Government in Portsmouth, 1835-1974', Portsmouth Papers, xxiii, 1974, p. 4.

fair and market tolls, and rents from Corporation property. It administered a handful of charities. Also, the aldermen and burgesses assembled had the right to elect M.P.s. From the point of view of local government, though, it was the sole administrator of the criminal law within the Borough boundaries: it appointed the constabulary and magistrates, and was empowered to hold Courts of Petty Sessions, Courts Record, Quarter Sessions and Courts Leet. The J.P.s were also responsible for authorizing the poor and highway rates, ratifying the appointment of parochial officials, and maintaining the borough gaol. The Corporation had not a little power, albeit primarily in the hands of the magistrates.

The appointment of magistrates was, then, the central issue in local government, and it lay in the hands of the aldermen. Aldermen, in turn, were self-appointed, moreover possessing the power of electing new burgesses. As there were in any year six justices (half of whom consisted of the Mayor, ex-Mayor, and Recorder), and as a number of the Aldermen lived outside of the town, it is not surprising that elections of J.P.s were contested only once between 1812 and 1833. In 1833, when it was apparent that municipal reform was on its way, there were only eleven aldermen. Of these, five did not live in Portsmouth; moreover, as the Municipal Corporations Commission went on to say, 'four are of the same name, and near relations; two more are nearly related to some of the above; and a seventh is also distantly

related to some one or more of them'<sup>1</sup>. The domination of the Carters, whose name of course the Commissioners were delicately referring to<sup>2</sup>, was fairly solid.

The family's predominance had been established in the later eighteenth century. It was the outcome of a protracted struggle between local representatives of the ministerialist Whigs (to whom the Admiralty gave some support) and a group of 'progressives' led by John Carter, a merchant and brewer, in which the second group seem to have benefited from conflicts between the Admiralty and the Ordnance Board. A recent account has explored the possibility that resentment over contracts may have been rather more prominent in men's minds than political principles<sup>3</sup>. In 1781 John Missing, a member of the Carter group, reminded the Admiralty that 'in all our Disputes we have never lost sight of that Connection which so long subsisted to material advantage between the Board at which your Lordship presides and the Corporation'; leading burgesses and aldermen on both sides had had contracts with both government departments<sup>4</sup>. The Carters and their

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<sup>1</sup>Rep., p. 804.

<sup>2</sup>John Bonham Carter, one of Portsmouth's two M.P.s between 1816 and 1838, was a member of the Commission.

<sup>3</sup>Surry and Thomas, Book of Original Entries, cit., p. lvii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 116-8, lvii; Missing continued: 'there is a Point beyond which the support from private Pockets must fail, and meer Despair will then drive men to accept of any offered Assistance, and to run into any wild extremes rather than submit to Force'. Rhetoric?

friends, however, were developing their businesses in and out of the town. In particular, building trade links with North America - giving an added bite to their opposition to a Ministry which led Britain into a ruinous war with the rebellious colony<sup>1</sup>.

If the immediate hostility to the government had been fed by some economic independence from Ordnance and Admiralty contracts, it was nourished by devoted commitment to liberal dissent. In 1761, extremely ill and expecting to die at any moment, John Carter wrote to his children in language that would have delighted R.H. Tawney:

I have found most benefit and profit by attending the most moderate Dissenters, and I think their methods most likely to promote real rational Religion. Every one has a right to judge for himself in religious matters, because these matters concern a Man in the nearest point - I mean his everlasting happiness - and are carried on between God and his own soul. Civil Society may form laws to carry on the ends of Government, but no Man or Body of Men have any right to impose in matters of Religion, and whenever they do so they encroach upon the right of Conscience, and tho' they may make many hypocrites, they can't force the mind to assent to what it does not believe 2.

It was a businessman's religion, expressed in the language of the balance sheet, strongly individualist and sternly opposed to outside prescription. No doubt it was evidence of God's keen concern for John Carter that the old man promptly recovered, outlived his younger wife, and married

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<sup>1</sup>Sir John Carter signed the peace petition in 1776; in 1779 Sandwich used direct threats to control the dockyard voters; Lowe, op.cit., pp. 70, 87, 118.

<sup>2</sup>Cit. V. Bonham Carter, In a Liberal Tradition: A social biography, 1700-1950; 1960, p. 19.

his housekeeper, finally dying at the age of 78. Judicious marriages further strengthened the family's position, both politically and economically, as they joined their fortunes with the Pikes (land and distilling), Spicers (brewing), Bonhams (landowners), and the Southampton Atherleys (banking).

Family connections were important in that they helped the Carters, once in the saddle, to stay there. When in 1816 John Bonham Carter decided to stand for Parliament (he was the first member of the family to do so), John W. Croker was invited to oppose him in the Tory interest<sup>1</sup>. Croker was, as Admiralty Secretary, a powerful and probably an attractive figure to those who felt that only desperate measures could save the Yard from the knife of post-war retrenchment. The attorney Daniel Howard made a series of notes on the line-up of the burgesses during the election, in an attempt to assess the results. He thought that 'the State of Parties and of Interests in the Corporation appears to be this - in respect to politics it may be a little difficult to develop it; but as to Interests, they were decidedly in favor of ye Carter Family'. Alderman Godwin, a banker, 'upon y whole ... was more influenced by personal and family Considerations than any political Bias; and therefore under Circumstances where these cod not be

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<sup>1</sup>John Wilson Croker: First Secretary of the Admiralty, 1809 to 1830; see B. Pool (ed.), The Croker Papers 1808-1857, 1967.

expected to operate it is probable that he woud prove himself to be more a Tory than a Whig'. It was, Howard thought, a genuine attachment that ran throughout the Corporation and went beyond immediate friendship or kinship:

in order ye better to explain the Source & Circumstance of ye predominancy of ye Family - Sir John Carter and his Father before him cannot be regarded otherwise than as the Founders of that Independcy (of Ministerial Influence) which has rendered ye Borough of Portsmo conspicuous in ye annals of Representation.

So far as young Bonham Carter was concerned, 'The high opinion entertained of his deceased Father, and the sort of veneration in which his Name was still held rendered the Business of a Canvas almost unnecessary'<sup>1</sup>.

Political admiration amounting to a 'sort of veneration' for the family's achievements was important in maintaining the family's dominance. It was enough to make a radical like Howard, once he reached his middle thirties, mellow into qualified support for the Whigs (see below). It was something that John Bonham Carter assiduously cultivated, evoking memories of his forbears at each occasion when he was called to speak. In 1816, after Croker had wisely retired from the contest, Bonham Carter was elected unopposed, declaring to applause that 'As his attachment to the town was hereditary, so were his political principles'<sup>2</sup>. After the first election under the Reform Act, Bonham Carter told a celebratory dinner that

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<sup>1</sup> Ms notes on the 1816 Parliamentary Election, n.d., P.C.R.O. PE 10.

<sup>2</sup> HT, 14 Oct. 1816.

He could never forget, that although it has been said that interest may push a man, there were no surer and more certain means of success in any pursuit than in being the son of a man whose memory was respected by his fellow townsmen (Applause). 1

The cult of the liberty-loving Carters might be based on a myth, but it worked.

A third strand in the Carters' political strength was the profound inspiration that they drew from religion<sup>2</sup>.

Presbyterians from the first years of the eighteenth century, by the early nineteenth they were strongly connected with the Unitarian Chapel in High Street. They must have got round the Test Act somehow; indeed, not only did the Carters manage to evade the legal ban on dissenters holding corporate office, but they also managed to swear in their Chapel's Minister, the Rev. Russell Scott, as a burgess<sup>3</sup>. There were other connections with dissent: the Rev. Dr. John Shovellor after the same election led a ratepayers' protest about the Tories' conduct of their anti-Whig campaign<sup>4</sup>. Both Edward and John Bonham Carter were generous supporters of the Lancasterian Institute<sup>5</sup>. The embrace of dissent even

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 3 Sept. 1832.

<sup>2</sup>J.E. Bradley suggests that the consequence of dissent on whig politics was to encourage the emergence of local M.P.s who regarded themselves as independent from bribery or coercion: 'Whigs and Nonconformists: "Slumbering Radicalism" in English Politics, 1739-1789', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, ix, 1975, pp. 1-27.

<sup>3</sup>Scott is described as a 'dissenting minister' in the 1820 poll book, voting for Markham and Bonham Carter.

<sup>4</sup>H.T., 4 Sept., 13 Nov. 1820.

<sup>5</sup>Each gave a guinea in 1822, for instance.

reached the small but influential Hebrew congregation: when the Corporation devoted £420 to the relief of the poor in January 1823, £20 found its way to the Synagogue for distribution; Bonham Carter embraced Jewish emancipation in Parliament along with the more usual forms of dissent. The Magistrates as a body defended the right (customary, not legal) of dissenting preachers to visit the workhouses, free from interference from the established clergy<sup>1</sup>. Surviving evidence from this period confirms that the Carters and organized dissent stood in a relationship of mutual support.

A fourth element in the Carters' support, albeit a minor one, was the local radical heritage. One figure in particular stands out here: the attorney Daniel Howard. Born around 1773, Howard was Lord Russell's election agent in 1791; in November 1795 this energetic young radical chaired a quasi-Jacobin meeting in protest at the 'Two Bills'<sup>2</sup>; in the same year he published a pamphlet defending the corresponding societies<sup>3</sup>; in 1798, together with Edward Casher and several other Portsmouth radicals, he defended a Portsea carpenter who had 'damned' Pitt, and prosecuted some Gosport loyalists

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<sup>1</sup>Corp. Letter Book, 7 Jan. 1823, 22 Dec. 1829, P.C.R.O. CE 7. Sir Francis Baring, M.P. between 1826 and 1865, was an Anglican, but at this early stage Baring was very much the junior partner.

<sup>2</sup>Wilson, op.cit., p. 556.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. E.P. Thompson, Making of the English Working Class, pp. 130-80. The local jacobins were visited in 1796 by John Binns, delegate of the London Corresponding Society. P.R.O., WO 1/1099, letter and enclosure of 11 Feb. 1796 (a reference I owe to George Parsons of Maquarie University).



for assaulting the carpenter. According to his obituary, Howard was the author of a number of pamphlets which did not survive, was a member of the Portsmouth Corresponding Society, and after the government security clamp-down of 1796 he and the other jacobins used to meet in a small boat out at Spithead. When Howard became a burgess there was, not surprisingly, 'some little opposition' from members of the corporation; he went on to become an Alderman, then Mayor in 1818, 1822, 1826 and 1830<sup>1</sup>. However weak the Portsmouth jacobins may have been<sup>2</sup>, it was characteristic of the Carters that they were able to present themselves to an activist like Howard as the most viable force for reform. In a similar fashion, the radical wine merchant William Lang, who in 1818 was leading a campaign against the closed electorate, refusing an offer of a burgessship in 1833, was the secretary of the first Carter-Baring election committee. John Knight, a master builder who had seconded a resolution by Lang on the abolition of closed voting, was also a member of the Liberal committee. Obvious difficulties faced radicals: the efforts required to overthrow the Whigs (even if within the radicals' powers, which is most doubtful) had

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<sup>1</sup>After the 1835 reform, he became Mayor in 1837 and 1841. Howard's obituary is in H.T. 16 Feb. 1850; Cashier's reminiscences are in H.T., 9 July 1832; D. Wilson's assessment of the local jacobins is in op.cit., pp. 586-99.

<sup>2</sup>A. Geddes claims that there was an 'outright radical artizan movement, connected with the dockyard and linked to the London Corresponding Society', but I know of little supporting evidence. 'Portsmouth During the Great French Wars, 1770-1800', Portsmouth Papers ix, 1970, p.17. In areas where such movements did exist, there is no shortage of evidence: see F.K. Donnelly and J. Baxter, 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition, 1791-1820', pp. 90-117 of S. Pollard and C. Holmes (eds.), Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire, Sheffield, 1976.

to be weighed against the fact that the Whigs were already in Parliament, voting for the abolition of the closed corporation and for an extended electorate. As Edward Carter told the radicals during the 1818 meeting, 'he felt assured, that the present Electors would most cheerfully submit that all householders should have the right of voting for Members in Parliament'<sup>1</sup>.

Although there is no evidence that the Carters ever coerced anybody into voting one way or another, no doubt their property in the Borough afforded some influence. Their brewing and distilling trade, combined with that of the Spicers in Portsea (with whom they were connected by marriage), gave them control of the two largest industrial units in the town outside the Yard<sup>2</sup>. The breweries owned pubs; although vague on the subject, John Bonham Carter thought that the partners by the 1830s owned some 65 or 70 houses in the area<sup>3</sup>. There was no need for the Carters to exert pressure for dependents to defer to them. As one authority has said, an employee voted for his master for a variety of reasons, even after 1832: 'because it was universally expected of him, because the livelihood of so many men depended on the employer that his interests seemed akin to theirs, and not infrequently because employer

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 23 Mar. 1818, 18 June 1832.

<sup>2</sup>Riley, 'Industries', p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 7 Oct. 1833.

and employee shared the same political views'<sup>1</sup>. The Pike/Spicer firm, moreover, was an enlightened employer, as befitted the religious complexion of its owners, and this was reflected in pensions schemes and presumably other managerial practices<sup>2</sup>.

The Carters also possessed influence as a result of their control of the Corporation<sup>3</sup>. The influence could be exerted in two ways: first, the Corporation was itself an employer; and second, it had legal authority within the borough. The Corporation's officials were for the main part Liberals: constables such as Isaac Wavell or John Astridge, had records of Liberal voting after 1832. There was one important exception, Roger Callaway, the Tory Town Clerk from 1802 to 1820. Since he was also clerk to the courts and attorney to the Corporation (in the 'thirties, the position was said to be worth over £1,500 a year), this was a matter of some importance, and Callaway was one of Cockburn's leading supporters in 1818-20. Once more, the Carters chose not to exercise coercion, and Callaway was left in his post until he died; then he was replaced with Franklin Howard, Daniel's son. Possibly the most important option open to the Carters was the selective licencing of public houses<sup>4</sup>. John Elias Atkins, a Tory banker, did

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<sup>1</sup>H.J. Hanham, Elections and Party Management: Politics in the time of Disraeli and Gladstone, 1959, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 22 Aug. 1836.

<sup>3</sup>I am using 'deference' here in a predominantly descriptive sense, taking it to refer to a generalized social relationship rather than any specific set of attitudes; men may defer for a number of reasons, from the machiavellian to the instinctive. See F. Parkin, Class Inequality and Political Order, 1972, pp. 85-8; H.J. Newby, 'The Deferential Dialectic' Comparative Studies in History and Society, xvii, 1975, pp. 139-64.

<sup>4</sup>Foster, op.cit., p. 218.

maintain in his evidence to the Municipal Corporations Commissioners that the J.P.s had preferred houses belonging to the family, but in his own evidence John Bonham Carter demonstrated that this had not been the case; it must have been a severe temptation, since his partners owned almost thirty per cent of the town's pubs<sup>1</sup>. Rather than coercion, the evidence points towards a deferential, partly pragmatic, acceptance of the Carters, that recognized the fact of their power, and took into account the possibility of coercion.

The Carters' relationship with the Yard workforce remains enigmatic. David Wilson has argued that during the Wars, the Yard men and the justices developed a mutual acceptance of one another's positions: Yard men supported the magistrates, while the bench in turn accepted the workers' nominees to the parochial offices<sup>2</sup>. Yet, if true, this mutuality was a very pragmatic affair, and after the Wars the justices accepted the transfer of power in Portsea Vestry from Yardmen to small traders without demur. In 1820 it was said that dockyard voters were instrumental in the return of a reformer for the southern division of the County. One Dockyard mechanic in 1832 is supposed to have complained that Napier's canvassing the foremen in the Yard before he spoke to the men was a slur upon their independent spirit<sup>3</sup>. But the evidence is scattered and unsatisfactory.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 7 Oct. 1833; Rep. Municipal Corporations Comm., pp. 808-10, 815; the poll book was printed by J. Hollingsworth.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit., p. 82. The issue is chewed over in ch. viii below.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 15 Oct. 1832, 8 Dec. 1834.

The Carters' support seems to have derived primarily from local assent to their leadership rather than the use of coercion. Assent was based upon a view of the family as representatives of a whole tradition of political independence, religious righteousness, and economic power. It certainly gave the family a good deal of power within the sphere of local government; As John Bonham Carter explained to the Corporation's Commissioners,

he had no hesitation in saying, that the principle which guided him under the close system, was to take care that there should be enough Aldermen resident to do the duty for the town, and then to select others of similar politics to himself in the county, and he took relations if he could 1.

And since it was a closed system, it was difficult to attack, particularly for the Tories, taunted as persons who 'with one breath, exclaim against all extension of the Elective Franchise, and in the next, fret and fume, that this important privilege is so confined'<sup>2</sup>. Yet the Carters and Corporation did face opponents, who if never numerous enough to loosen the family's grip, could and did have a nuisance value.

The Tories in particular formed a coherent and organized opposition. Their strategies followed three main lines: organizing support for Tory candidates in the county elections, which undermined the Carters' prestige; publicly manifesting loyalty to Crown and Toryism; and

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 7 Oct. 1833.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 13 Mar. 1820:

challenging the Corporation's legitimacy, most frequently by claiming that the Carters had usurped their powers and held them by force. Nor was the Tory challenge without sympathisers within the Corporation itself. This can be seen most clearly in the case of the 1818 election, when they brought forward Admiral Sir George Cockburn to contest the second seat for the Borough. By bringing Cockburn down to canvas before the sitting members had left Westminster, the Tories ensured that the Liberals would bear any responsibility for a division. The second member, Admiral John Markham, wrote to the Corporation offering to withdraw:

Finding that the Unanimity does not prevail at present which has for 17 years past distinguished me by your Choice to represent you in five successive Parliaments, and that the Issue of a Poll is doubtful, I have determined to decline troubling you further on this occasion 1.

Probably the burgesses who were prepared to vote for Cockburn hoped that the latter would use his position at the Admiralty Board to pump much-needed cash into the town. In 1816 the non-electors who supported Croker had (in Howard's words)

told the Corporation that their Members had for some time past with little Except<sup>n</sup> been in Opposition & hostility to his Majesty's Government - what had much injured y place; and that the Subscribers to y Letter owed it to themselves & y Interests of y Towns to recommend some Gent<sup>n</sup> in ye Confid<sup>ce</sup> of his Majestys Ministers 2.

More directly, Cockburn had brought his influence to bear. Bonham Carter wrote to his sister that 'Cockburn sent a

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<sup>1</sup>Book of Original Entries, 13 June 1818, P.C.R.O., CE 6/3.

<sup>2</sup>P.C.R.O., PE 10, cit.

Captain in the Navy to Capt. Thomas [Thomas Wren Carter] to say that if he could prevail on Mr Atherley [a cousin of the Carters] to stay away, he should have the command of a frigate'. The 'mob' had its throats lubricated with beer at Cockburn's expense, 20s. was handed to each gaoled debtor, and 700 guests were feasted<sup>1</sup>. No doubt the dissenting liberal conscience was much shocked at such generosity; but when Cockburn arrived in Portsea, his carriage was drawn by the delighted crowd.

By the time of the 1820 election, Whig attitudes had hardened and new burgesses were enrolled to swell their ranks. Once more the Tory organization was impressive. Markham received a petition signed by 2,300 inhabitants, asking him to withdraw, while 1,400 ratepayers petitioned the Corporation to vote for Cockburn. Cockburn himself dispensed beer by the barrel-load, and his supporters laid siege to the Town Hall while the voting was going on.

TABLE ONE: VOTING PATTERNS, 1820 ELECTION

Domicile of voter	Cockburn plumpers	Carter & Markham splits	Carter & Cockburn splits
Portsmouth	2	12	10
Hampshire or Isle of Wight	0	14	1
Rest of England	4	11	5
TOTAL	6	37	16

(Source: Hollingsworth, An Impartial Account)

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 22 June 1818; Bonham Carter, op.cit., p. 33.

Despite all the activity outside the Hall, and a furious debate within, the Whigs won comfortably (although Carter won much more comfortably than Markham, which suggests the strength of assent rather than force in the family's strength). Most local inhabitants split their votes, dividing evenly between those who voted for Carter and Markham and those who voted for Carter and Cockburn. The Hampshire gentlemen (a large number of whom were Atherleys) were the great supporters of the Whig slate. Only two local men dared plump for Cockburn, and one of these was Callaway, the Town Clerk (who admitted that 'from the great respect and esteem they entertained for his father', Bonham Carter was sure to be elected); the other was the Rev. George Cuthbert, an Anglican who was related to the Carters. These two were exceptions; the safest Tory in Portsmouth was one who gave half his vote to a Carter.

The 1820 election was the nearest thing to an open confrontation between Whigs and Tories before 1835. The last contest for the post of Mayor before 1836 occurred in 1812, when the Rev. Cuthbert (who was an Alderman) lost to James Carter. Non-electors were hardly aware of the contest: 'We knew nothing of the squabbles of the Corporation, and therefore it did not interest the Townspeople', said William Lang<sup>1</sup>. The Corporation was secure from challenges from within.

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<sup>1</sup>HT, 7 Oct. 1833.



The Tories were more effective in conducting propaganda from outside against the unrepresentative character of the Corporation. Twelve 'respectable householders' marched into the Council Chamber during the 1820 election, and tried to tender votes for Cockburn (the votes were recorded, but judged invalid); afterwards, the Tories challenged the validity of twentysix Whig votes. One day after the election, a committee was set up, dedicated to 'recovering for, and confining the Elective Franchise to, the Inhabitant Householders of this Borough'<sup>1</sup>. Although the Elective Franchise Committee did include two radicals (William Lang and Edward Casher), and at least two Liberals (George Grant and Henry Deacon, the latter of whom later developed into a leading Tory), most of its members were Tories<sup>2</sup>. In 1831, under the pressure of the reform agitation (and in the aftermath of Swing's march over southern England), the Tories set up another committee calling for 'moderate reform' of Parliament, opposing their own scheme to the 'hasty and ill-digested' Bill brought forward by Althorp and Grey. The most active local Tories were represented, including Admiral Sir Lucius Curtis of Cosham, the attorney George Soaper, John Atkins the banker, and Thomas Wilder and Alexander Poulden, also bankers. Despite the eminent names, the appeal lacked conviction, while an anti-reform petition in the same year collected a derisory twenty names<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 13 Mar., 1 May 1820.

<sup>2</sup>Nine of the eighteen members had definite records of active Tory support.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 18 Apr., 26 Dec. 1831.

Loyalty campaigns were a traditional Tory activity, yet even these were often headed off by the agile Portsmouth Whigs. When the Prince Regent escaped assassination in 1817, for instance, there was a petition from 4,000 inhabitants to congratulate him. But the petition came not from the Tories but the Whigs; Samuel Spicer the mayor presented it, and was knighted for his pains, leading a deputation that included Daniel Howard. In January 1820, the prince came to the throne as George IV; in June his wife returned from self-imposed exile to claim her rights as Queen. The ensuing constitutional crisis, known as the Queen Caroline affair, presented a further opportunity for Tory loyalty and Whig counter-displays<sup>1</sup>. First were the Tories, who sent a loyalty address to George IV when he moved his ship from Cowes to Spithead; the head of the deputation, the brewer George Garratt, was knighted by the grateful monarch. The Corporation passed declarations of loyalty to almost everybody involved, although when the Lords acquitted Caroline it did little against people caught breaking the windows of inhabitants who refused to illuminate their houses. Whigs and radicals sent a monster address to Caroline signed by over 11,500 people and measuring over thirtyone yards long;

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<sup>1</sup>The story is slightly more complicated than I suggest. See Briggs, Age of Improvement, pp. 191-4; J. Stevenson, 'The Queen Caroline Affair', in Stevenson (ed.), London in the Age of Reform, 1977, pp. 117-48. Both the King and Queen had been what is perhaps best described as 'indiscreet'.

at least one dissenting chapel presented its own address, and Edward Carter had agreed to lead a campaign for the Queen should the Lords have found her guilty. A second Tory petition failed to attract as many signatures from the entire county as the Whigs had won for theirs in Portsmouth alone; prominent local Tories, moreover, had stayed aloof from the entire agitation<sup>1</sup>.

Most local Tory activities caused the Carters little worry. The only alarm the Whigs felt was at their opponents' ability to marshall roughly one-half of the county electors from Portsea Island on the Tory side. Unfortunately there are no surviving poll books for this period; while ministerial influence upon dockyard voters was always a factor, Whig failure to gain a foothold in the county via the urban voters was a troubling omen<sup>2</sup>.

Radical activity lacked even that limited success which the Tories achieved. The immediate post-war years saw little activity, despite a case of suspected arson in a wood mill that introduced steam engines in 1815<sup>3</sup>. The troubles of

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., *passim* 1820 (but especially 4 Sept. and 13 Nov.); Town Council to House of Commons, 3 Jan. 1821; to King, 3 Jan. 1821, in P.C.R.O., CC 5/35.

<sup>2</sup>Lowe, *op.cit.*, ch. v.

<sup>3</sup>See H.T., 1 May, Hants Chronicle, 1 May, and Hants Courier, 1 May 1816, all of whom thought an incendiary had been at work; the Yard authorities expressed doubts: P.R.O. ADM 106/1868, 16 May 1815. There are further cases of possible arson reported in Hants Courier, 13 Feb. 1815 and 1 Jan. 1816; P.R.O. ADM 106/1876, 25 Apr. 1816; H.T., 6, 27 Sept. 1819. For the period as a whole, see E. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, ch. 2; E.P. Thompson, Making of the Working Class, pp. 627-8.

1817-20 had little impact in the town<sup>1</sup>. An attempt to hold a meeting with Orator Hunt in St. George's Square was abandoned; instead Cobbett and Lord Cochrane addressed 20,000 people from Portsdown Hill, under the eyes of the county magistrates and the yeomanry cavalry (commanded by a Portsmouth merchant, LT-Col. Lindegren). Among the local organizers of the meeting were Sagger Lowe, a Cobbettite hairdresser whose only other recorded activity was advising artizans to emigrate to the United States; Mr. Goldsmith, a farmer; and a 'Dr. Hallett' from Landport<sup>2</sup>. Also in 1817, James Williams, a Portsea printer, was sentenced to one year in prison and a fine of £100 for reprinting and selling Hone's parodies of the Credo and Litany<sup>3</sup>. An attempt to call a County Meeting to condemn the Peterloo massacre ended, tamely, with an appeal to leave the question to Parliament<sup>4</sup>.

Independent radicalism<sup>5</sup> disappeared after 1819, not to reappear for twenty years. It may have just gone underground,

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<sup>1</sup>Howard sent Sidmouth a deposition from a man who claimed to know where Stockport radicals had secreted pikes: Corp. Letter Book, 2 Sep. 1819, P.C.R.O. CE 7.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 27 Jan., 3, 10, 17 Feb; Hants Chronicle, 20, 27 Jan, 3, 10, 17 Feb. 1817.

<sup>3</sup>Williams claimed that he had agreed to print the material for an itinerant vendor; perhaps a spy had framed him 'pour encourager les autres'. At any rate, by 1830 Williams was back in business at 47 Queen Street, where he lived a blameless life until succeeded by his son James Michael. Hants Chronicle, 1 Dec. 1817.

<sup>4</sup>H.T., 19 July, 11 Oct. 1819.

<sup>5</sup>This clumsy phrase is meant to convey the possibility of radical activity that was not dependent on the dominant Whig group, and possibly opposed it.

for the appearance of burning ricks on the horizon at night was reflected in Portsmouth by renewed fears. Captain Purvis, a prominent Gosport Tory, had a letter warning him that he and his house would 'blow up' when Swing paid a visit. Swing also wrote to the editor of the Telegraph, asking him to support the rural poor<sup>1</sup>. Swing was perhaps more influential as a memory than as a fact, so far as Portsmouth was concerned, particularly when it became known that Francis Baring, one of the Whig M.P.s, had helped to arrest a locally-respected farmer and his wife who may have encouraged the machine-breakers. 'What about the Deacles' was a favourite hecklers' cry; during the 1835 election one man carried a blood-smearred placard with 'Baring and Deacle' written on it; radicals called Baring simply by the name of 'Deacle'<sup>2</sup>. Cobbett too returned to the town in 1832, addressing three meetings of paying audiences at the Beneficial Society's Hall in Portsea. His only supporter that I have been able to identify this time was a publican and brewer named T.W. Sweet, who was also active in the Portsea vestry<sup>3</sup>.

Before 1832, most active Portsmouth radicals were working men or small businessmen. Indeed, in this they were remarkably like those of the northern industrial areas: workmen, with a smattering of 'doctors', newsagents, or small shopkeepers<sup>4</sup>. They were unlike northern radicals, however,

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 29 Nov. 1830, Rural incendiarism seems to have been endemic in south Hampshire for much of this period, judging by newspaper reports. Grey had an enormous sympathy for the rioters. See Northbrook, op.cit., pp.74-9.

<sup>2</sup>Hants Notes and Queries, 1887, vol. iii, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 16, 23 July 1852.

<sup>4</sup>Foster, op.cit., pp. 151-2.

in that they lacked the mass following that drilled on the South Yorkshire moors and formed the backbone of the illegal unions; and it was this mass following that justifies the description of 'working class movement'<sup>1</sup>. What were the causes of Portsmouth's relative quiescence? First, the absolute presence of state power in the town was incomparably greater than in the northern industrial centres (which, indeed, were often barely urbanized); when Cobbett and Cochrane spoke on the Hill, the authorities had placarded the gates of the old townships with warnings against attending, and placed the Garrison at the ready<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, the state's control over local employment gave it a ready weapon. At Woolwich, for instance, two clerks and a quartermen were dismissed for organizing public readings from Carlyle's works, and no doubt the men at Portsmouth were aware of this<sup>3</sup>. Thirdly, more than fear of the consequences, there is no reason to suppose that Portsmouth's workers would have accepted the radical critique of the status quo. Their industrial experience was very different from that of textile workers, who were subjected to the fluctuations of the trade cycle; the labour market in shipbuilding had its own patterns, and even these were different for private and Royal Yards. Lastly, there was sheer geographical distance. Portsmouth men were more likely to know a Frenchman than a Manchester one (see ch. iii above); Peterloo lacked the immediacy

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 49-50; Thompson, Making of the Working Class, Part III; Donnelly and Baxter, op.cit., pp. 106-12; F.K. Kaijage 'Working Class Radicalism in Barnsley, 1816-1820', in Pollard and Holmes (eds.), op.cit., pp. 128, 131-2.

<sup>2</sup>Hants Chronicle, 17 Feb. 1817.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 3 Jan. 1820.

that so shocked Yorkshire radicals<sup>1</sup>. Portsmouth radicalism had its chiefs, but could not find the indians.

Although the Tories were able to bring out a crowd in favour of Cockburn, they were themselves men of the elite. Their leaders were found among the army and navy officers, the officials of the government departments, other civilians attached to the government, and those who were linked to the county gentry in some way. Admiral Sir Lucius Curtis, who owned an estate at Cosham, combined the service with gentrydom: he was among the non-electors who tendered for Cockburn in 1820, declared himself in favour of 'moderate reform' in 1831, and sat on the Conservative county election Committee in 1832. The intertwining of Tory interests is well shown by Moses Greetham, who as well as being Deputy Judge Advocate for the port was Lucius Curtis' son-in-law and Law Agent to the Solicitor of the Admiralty. Greetham and his son sat on the Extended Franchise Committee in 1820. Thomas Wildey, a banker, who supported the 'moderate reform' campaign and acted as secretary to the 1832 election committee, had a contract with the Ordnance Department to act as paymaster for pensions. Dr Daniel Quarrier, a leading Tory in both Gosport and Portsmouth, and a member of the 1832 Committee, was a county J.P. and surgeon to the R.M. Depot. Elias B. Arnaud, a member of the 1820 Franchise Committee, was

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<sup>1</sup>Donnelly and Baxter, op.cit., p. 108; Kaijage, op.cit., p. 120.

Customs Commissioner. John Lindegren (presumably the Lieut-Col. of Yeomanry), of the 1820 Franchise Committee, was a merchant, local agent for the East Indian Co., and consul for the Brazilian, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian governments. John Atkins, banker, a supporter of 'moderate reform', was local agent for British and Indian government securities. Government and its connections were a rich source of Toryism.

For most army and navy officers, of course, Toryism was a reflex action. When the midshipmen of H.M.S. Sultan held a dinner in 1815, there were sixteen toasts, including one to the sentiment, 'May our present excellent Constitution never be subverted'; another recalled the agitation against the Corn Laws, 'May the judicious and mild measures of Government succeed in quelling the spirit of riot in the metropolis'. The young gentlemen sank two bumpers with each of these toasts to demonstrate their enthusiasm<sup>1</sup>. In most areas, anglican clergymen were born little Tories, but not in Portsmouth<sup>2</sup>. Charles B. Henville, the Vicar of both Portsmouth and Portsea parishes, and more especially his brother James, Vicar of Emsworth and Warblington, were pronounced Liberals; it was to be expected that their Curates (who both came out as Tories when the Henvilles were dead and gone) would manage to mute their political allegiances.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 13 Mar. 1815.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. E.J. Evans, 'Some Reasons for the Growth of English Rural Anti-Clericalism, c. 1750-c.1830', Past and Present, lxvi, 1975, pp. 84, 105-6.



The Carters' control over the borough was never seriously challenged in these years. While there was an important shift in power in the Portsea vestry, this was not primarily a political issue, but was rather something of a 'ratepayers' revolt' (see ch. viii below). While the Tories managed to keep control of St. Thomas's vestry, the declining importance of the old township in the economy and society of Portsmouth meant that this was a thin reward. Only once did the grip relax: during the period of Cockburn's holding one of the two seats; this was less a matter of political principle than of a fear that the town's known anti-ministerialism might be damaging the economy. Moreover, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Carters' political behaviour marked less a strategy for governing the town as a whole, than a way of regulating relations within the 'governing class'<sup>1</sup>. Control of the corporation was not the only way of governing Portsmouth. Its use was first in the choice of M.P.s, and this gave the Carter group a hold upon the state; at the very least, it gave them a hearing in the House. Secondly, more locally, the Corporation could use its powers and funds to prevent 'encroachments' by the state, particularly by the Admiralty<sup>2</sup>. Thirdly, and at a still more local level, the Corporation was a symbol, and it was important that this group (liberal, nonconformist) controlled it rather than any other; if a closed Corporation,

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<sup>1</sup>By this I mean those social strata from whom the local and national governing personnel were chosen.

<sup>2</sup>See the discussion of Corporation/Yard relations in Wilson, op.cit., pp. 67-73.

then this was so through circumstances not choice, and they would do their best not to be corrupted by it. The Whigs' own attitude was summed up in a post-election address to the burgesses and aldermen by Francis Baring:

He was much obliged to the Electors for having again conferred so high an honour upon him; and as the best proof of his gratitude, the first thing he should do when sitting in Parliament, would be to do all in his power to deprive them of their exclusive privileges by which he had just been returned (Laughter and Cheers) 1.

The Carter group and their allies, in their control of the Corporation, were a living example of confident liberalism and undogmatic moral rectitude among the urban middle class.

## 2. The Reformed Corporation and the Liberal Party

If radicals and conservatives hoped that the Reforms of 1832 and 1835 would shake the Carters off their throne, they were mistaken. At least in the short run, Portsmouth's political institutions were populated by the same men whose earnest faces had become so familiar in the 'Twenties, together with a few of their friends who came in from agitation 'out of doors'. The first three Parliamentary elections were all contested, on the first occasion by a radical, on the second by a radical and a Tory, on the third by two Tories. The result? Bonham Carter sat uninterruptedly until his death in 1838, while Baring (first elected in 1826) sat without a break until he received his peerage in 1865.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 2 May 1831.

TABLE TWO: ELECTION RESULTS, 1832-7

	LIB	LIB	RAD	CONS	CONS
1832	826	707	258		
1835	643	571	335	557	
1837	635	630		518	438

Source: McCalmont's Parliamentary Pollbook, repr. 1971, p. 240.

Between 1837 and 1857 the Conservatives did not even contest the seat; the 1855 poll occurred only because an optimistic radical-liberal thought he might be able to break into the Liberal fold.

The three candidates who fought the 1832 election were a mixed bunch. Bonham Carter, the Whig, a barrister in the process of completing that great victorian transition from brewing to landed gentleman. Baring was a member of a famous banking family that had already settled itself on a number of landed estates<sup>1</sup>; he was also connected by his own marriage with the great Whig family, the Greys<sup>2</sup>; three weeks after that marriage, Baring had been offered the seat at Portsmouth upon one condition, that he was prepared to

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<sup>1</sup>See F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century, 1971, pp. 56-60, 37-8.

<sup>2</sup>Baring married the fifth daughter of Admiral Sir George Grey, commissioner of Portsmouth dockyard, who himself was married to a Whitbread.

Northbrook, op.cit., p. 44.

give support to Parliamentary reform. Like Carter, Baring trained as a lawyer, but unlike Carter seems never to have made a career of the law; he was something of a stuffed shirt, never able to develop much personal popularity in the constituency, and melted happily into the liberal mediocracy of the fifties. Captain Charles Napier, the third candidate, strode around the town with a union jack waistcoat, calling on voters while wearing the shabbiest uniform that half-pay could buy. To the arch-Tory J.W. Croker, who hated democracy, Napier was a 'strange, wild, Navy captain, half mad', who had become 'a Radical in hopes of being returned for Portsmouth'<sup>1</sup>. Napier may have been a bit of a chameleon; although a member of an eminent family of radical army and navy officers, his own politics were curiously indistinct. As Bonham Carter said in 1835, 'the Tories have called Admiral Napier a desperate Radical. I have not, remember, called him so; I do not pretend to know what the Admiral's politics are'<sup>2</sup>. His 1832 address was hardly distinguishable from that of the orthodox Whigs:

My principles have been Liberal all my life;  
I have always been favourable to Reform, and  
to a correction of abuses; and as the present  
Administration have given Reform, and are  
correcting abuses, I am favourable to them<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Croker to Hertford, 6 May 1833, in B. Pool (ed.), op.cit., p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 12 Jan. 1835. Napier had been made an Admiral while serving in the Portuguese navy, to the great displeasure of the British Admiralty.

<sup>3</sup>H. N. Williams (ed.), The Life and Letters of Admiral Sir Charles Napier, 1917, p. 80.

He was distinctive chiefly in the importance which he attached to 'interests': 'I have always understood that Parliament should be made up of men of all classes: the landed proprietors to look after the landed interest; the manufacturer to represent the manufacturing interest; and the naval officer to protect the naval interest'. Throughout his career, even when eventually elected as M.P. for Greenwich, Napier called for slop contracts to be placed in Portsmouth and Plymouth rather than London. Baring and Carter, if they admitted the divisibility of such interests, would have seen them as best represented by enlightened intellectuals such as themselves; neither, and Baring in particular as First Lord, had much time for the argument that M.P.s should use their positions to benefit their constituents at the cost of the national interest and the principles of political economy.

The sitting members, who won the election, campaigned on their records as reformers. They doubted, giving Wellington as the classical example, whether even the most gallant officer necessarily made a good politician<sup>1</sup>. On the whole, the local radical establishment rallied behind the Carter-Baring Committee: William Lang was its chairman, while its supporters included William Bilton, Henry Childs, and Charles Vandenhoff, a papermaker and schoolmaster who in May had called for a civil war upon the House of Lords<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 2 July 1832.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 14 May, 18 June 1832.

Napier was probably being unjust when he described the election result as a victory for Corporation bribery, government compulsion on dockyard voters, and brewery coercion upon tenants. Nevertheless, for all his political vagueness he won 260 votes, and the hustings showed that he possessed strong support among the unenfranchised. Significantly, the crowd accorded a hearing to Bonham Carter at the hustings, but Baring was howled down, and only escaped a beating from sailors and a mob by the intervention of Napier<sup>1</sup>. William Lang afterwards summed up the result as follows:

The upper classes of tradesmen certainly voted for Mr Carter. Captain Napier was supported by some respectable men... the opponents, however, of Carter and Baring were, great numbers of them, the low radicals of the place down Point, not of the rank from which Burgesses are chosen 2.

The matter deserves closer investigation.

Napier did indeed attract several 'respectable men'. Foremost among these were the liberal banker William Grant, who was to become a life-long friend of the eccentric seaman, and Edward Casher, a veteran radical and one-time jacobin. They probably did their cause some good by associating with a number of Tories, if in the long run this misalliance led to bad tempers. Edward Naylor, second master at the grammar school (an ex-officer of marines, who was unable to keep

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 3 Sep., 17 Dec. 1832.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 7 Oct. 1833.

his beautiful Portuguese wife on half-pay), was secretary to a Napier dinner committee; he had signed the 1820 loyalty declaration, and backed 'moderate reform' in 1831. Others included a number of naval men, for whom this was their only active part in the town's life, and who probably just wanted a naval M.P. The characteristic Napier campaigner, though, was not a Tory nor particularly respectable. One was T. Sweet, the Cobbettite; another was William Atfield, a merchant whose record embraced radicalism and toryism, who led the campaign against the new poor law (see ch.VIII) and had one of the most unruly mouths ever heard in the council chamber.

Only one poll book has survived for this election. It displays the complexity that we have come to expect from this type of source<sup>1</sup>. One historian has even doubted whether the pollbook, in which the name, address, occupation and vote of each elector is recorded, is amenable to structural analysis:

County poll books show that many men, when they went to the polls, behaved not as individuals but as members of clearly defined groups. But the groups these men composed cannot be defined in class terms....the principal factors which conditioned the behaviour of each electoral group - which defined it as a group - were endogamous to the localities in which the group existed 2.

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<sup>1</sup>D.C. Moore, 'Social Structure, Political Structure and Public Opinion in Mid Victorian England', in R. Robson (ed.), Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain, 1967, p. 23. Cf. J. Vincent, Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted, 1967, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Moore, op.cit.

Perhaps this is a fair summary of the situation in many counties, where an entire community might be embraced in one stark social relationship between landlord and tenant or labourer. Even if true of the counties, though, it is unlikely to have been true of the towns, and particularly not of Portsmouth where the one large employer - the Admiralty - would have had no direct leverage over the property owners that formed the electorate.

TABLE THREE: VOTING PATTERNS BY OCCUPATION, 11 AND 12 DECEMBER 1832

	Percentage of each occupational category voting for:				
	Carter- Baring Split	Carter- Napier Split	Napier- Baring Split	Napier Plumper	N=
Professions	57.4	9.3	-	11.1	54
Gent., officer	67.4	13.9	0.8	35.7	129
Manufacturer	76.0	14.9	1.6	5.8	121
Retailer	79.5	8.6	0.5	11.9	210
Skilled worker, Yard official	76.9	12.8	-	5.2	78
Unskilled worker, seaman	53.3	6.7	-	40.0	15
Farmer, market gardener	57.1	4.8	-	14.3	21

Source: Pollbooks, St. George's and St. John's Wards,  
Portsea, P.C.R.O. VI.

The first point to emerge from these figures is that the Whigs' staunchest support came from the retailers and manufacturers (the Yard vote disappeared almost entirely in



1835 when there was an outgoing Tory government). Of course, such voters were by no means outside the class structure. John Vincent in particular has reminded us of the importance of the vendor-customer relationship in an age when industry was too small for the employee-employer relationship to have assumed overarching predominance<sup>1</sup>. Publicans and shopkeepers were open to 'selective trading', whether an outright boycott or an unspoken preference for other retail outlets. Among retailers, butchers and victuallers were most likely to vote for Napier, and this suggests that the Carters were not exercising their capacity to manipulate the licence system, even if they did expect their own tenants to vote Whig (of this I have no evidence). A few grocers, such as the Tory Meschach Hannam, voted for Napier, while small general shopkeepers favoured the mainstream Liberals along with the majority of retail traders.

Yard voters, for the most part clerks or minor officials together with the occasional shipwright or principal officer, almost unanimously voted for the Whigs. These cannot all have been coerced votes, since they included one or two men who had been superannuated, and thus had nothing to look for from a future government. They were probably genuinely interested in consolidating reform, and were optimistic about the likely achievements of the Whig ministry. Those yard

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<sup>1</sup>Pollbooks, pp. 24-5, 40-2; cf. Foster on exclusive trading in op.cit., 150, 169-70.

people who did not vote for the Whigs generally voted for Napier and shared a vote with Carter, which again reinforces the view that these were genuine reformers' votes. Only two yard people did not follow this pattern, both plumping for Baring (one or two skilled men voting for Napier alone cannot be positively identified as yard employees); this seems to have been the nearest that anyone could think of to a protest Tory vote. Seamen themselves made up the bulk of the 'unskilled' voters, tending to place themselves either with the Whigs or, more strongly than other groups, with Napier. They included one waterman, for example, who marched into the polling booth and insisted, although told that he was not a qualified elector, upon the clerk recording a plumper for Napier.

Napier's firmest supporters were the navy officers, together with a few 'gentry' many of whom may have been half-pay officers. More navy officers voted for Napier than for either Carter or Baring, the only occupational group for which this was true. Exceptions tended to be men with some local interest, such as Jonathan Gain, a paymaster, whose family had a farm at Lumps Fort. Navy officers would no doubt have preferred a Tory, although they probably did not feel so strongly as army officers, but voted for Napier because he was a navy man who would as an M.P. benefit the service. Very few army officers turned out to vote, and most of those who did shared between Carter and Baring. One of the two exceptions was Capt. J.O. Travers, the barrack master, who shared his votes between Napier and Carter. Gentlemen and

professionals who voted for Napier seem to have done so, in spite of rather than because of his radical reputation. Among them were several known Tories, such as the solicitor, Robert Thorpe. Most professionals voted Liberal.

The election was a vindication of the Whigs' record on reform, and in particular it was a vindication of the Bonham Carters. So the Liberals saw it, and they were probably right. Napier's publicity had stressed the closedness of the group that clung on to the old corporation (see sample on p. 281), and the hustings had shown that this had real popular appeal. But, as Lang said afterwards, 'the Vox Popoli on this occasion was no indication of the sentiments of the Electors'<sup>1</sup>. The Reform Act was celebrated by an enormous festival. There was a public dinner in St. George's Square, where 'all those who participate in the general feeling of the desirableness of Reform, whether they be Rich or Poor, or of the Middling Classes', were invited to sit down together to a meal of meats, pies, potatoes, 'Hot Plumb Pudding', and three pints of beer<sup>2</sup>. Thirty thousand people turned out on Southsea Common to watch a firework display and 2,700 of the more committed ate their public dinners in each township. An armoured man mounted on a white charger led a monster procession through the streets, brandishing a sword in one hand and a cap of liberty in the other. It was no time to be a Tory.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 13 Aug., 3 Sept., 17 Dec. 1832.

<sup>2</sup>Handbill, 2 Aug. 1832, in W.H. Saunders Collection, Portsmouth City Library, vol. 1, p. 18.

# Bonham & Deacle,

From the BOROUGH,  
Beg leave to announce their extraordinary  
**Menagerie and Museum!**  
for public patronage and support;

In obtruding themselves thus early upon the notice of their Friends, they wish to explain that they would not have deemed it necessary to have addressed you, as they thought the *Ground they have always held*, was to be *their own* as a recompense for the

**GREAT SACRIFICES THEY HAVE MADE!!!**

BUT,

**CHARLEY NAPIER,**

Who wishes to set up in Business for himself, having applied for the *Ground* is beyond all *BEARING*, and we are thus compelled to offer *ourselves* for that patronage which we think we are deserving of.

## **THE ENORMOUS ELEPHANT** *Known as OLD BILLY,*

Is the First on the List, and can support from his strength and size *any Thing*. He was captured and manacled and Deacled by the present Owners, about two years since, near *EYE-ZORE*. His size is immense; bulk, prodigious; impudence, wonderful; weight, ponderous; and agility, almost incredible, when the extreme dimensions of his hinder parts are considered. He has performed lately before various Audiences, and always came off with great *spirit* and *eclat*. His former Owners cast him off owing to the great quantities of Syllabub and Pigeon Pies he always devoured, and without which he could not live. In the same Store may be seen, a **YOUNG BILLY**, a *Cub*, who will, it is thought, fall far short of his Sire, in every respect, but in impudence.

## **A REAL GRIFFIN**

The size of this Ugly Beast is small, and its squeaking is an admirable Contrast with the noble roar of the Lion; it once belonged to the King's Street Menagerie. Parchment and Red Tape are produced from this Beast's Skin and Sinues.

## **The Great Gloster Berbee!**

A decent looking Animal of extreme Muscular Strength. Very peculiar *Feed* for this Animal is required, Sugar, Bacon, and Onions, being its chief sustenance.

## **THE LION, DANIEL!**

Is a very fine tame creature, and very fond of its Masters, and may be frequently heard roaring with joy at their appearance, or even the mention of their Names. Very easy to play with. Can't bite.

## **The Great Banking Chamellion!**

This Animal is very proud, and delights in *Parade*, and living in *Banks* near the water's edge. It is erroneously stated that this Animal lives on air—this one lives on paper. As the genius is not exactly known, a public examination will be allowed.

## **A JACKAL,**

with a Tail not a yard long.—This, the Lion provider is in a *Chamber lain* under the Lion's Den.

In the Museum, we have a large variety of *sneaks, toads, serpents, and other reptiles*, all in preparation for a Corporate Stuffing, and which are to be presented to the Corporation of these Towns, when done with.

**ADMISSION FREE.**

Gardner, Printer, Portsea.]

DRAMATIS PERSONAE IN GARDNER'S FREE MART FAIR POSTER

Bonham: John Bonham Carter, M.P.

'Deacle': Francis Thornhill Baring, M.P.

'Old Billy': William Lang sr., wine merchant and tallow  
chandler, active reformer at least from 1818, when  
supported reform; on Liberal Committee in 1832  
election. Radical. Councillor (St. Thomas ward)  
from 1835.

'Young Billy': William Lang, jr. Partner in wine business;  
Liberal.

'A Griffin': Nathaniel Griffin (1803-59), son of the minister  
of King Street congregationalist chapel, attorney  
then barrister from 1840, on Liberal Committee in  
1832 election. Councillor (St. George's ward),  
Dec. 1835.

'The Berbee': Thomas Burbey, Merchant; burgess 1820-35;  
Alderman, 1835. Active reformer at least from  
1831, member of Liberal Committee, 1832.

'The Lion': inevitably, Daniel Howard (1773-1850). Burgess  
and alderman under old corporation, active  
reformer, mayor twice under reformed council;  
alderman, 1835.

'The Chamelion': ? Possibly George Grant, banker, who had a  
record of Tory activity in the 1820s but turned  
to the reformers in 1830-31.

'A Jackal': Erasmus Jackson, banker, chamberlain to the  
Corporation; Liberal Committee in 1831 and 1832;  
a Congregationalist.

'A Monkey': ?

Note also the reference to 'Corporate Stuffing', which has  
to do with the propensity to dine well rather than any  
peremptory injunction.

All the same, disenchantment with the Whigs set in fast<sup>1</sup>. The triumph of reform cooled, particularly as Graham's administration at the Admiralty sent a chill wind through the economy. A meeting of Liberals before the 1835 election was marked by the open expression of radical disappointment. William Bilton and John Sheppard tried to commit the two candidates in advance to shorter parliaments and household suffrage, but had to place unity before principal. The Rev. George Arnot, a Baptist minister, spoke for Landport radicals when he said that he was prepared to support the Whigs, 'but he should like them a good deal more if they had not cringed and crouched to the Tories'. At the same meeting two burgesses (James Hoskins and Nathaniel Griffin, both dissenters and both lawyers) spoke grimly of the government's backsliding. Bonham Carter himself was not happy about the result of three years' liberalism, but insisted on the need for unity under Whig leadership: 'The basis of the Reform Bill perhaps may not be broad enough, but he believed it sufficiently broad to guide the legislature as to what were the real opinions and sentiments of the people of England'<sup>2</sup>. More serious for the Liberals' future was a meeting of freeholders from the Yard to pledge support for Tory candidates for the county<sup>3</sup>. It is not clear who organized this meeting, or how many people were involved, but it created enough concern for the liberal Telegraph to appeal to Yard workers.

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<sup>1</sup>Close, op.cit., p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 1 Dec. 1834.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 8 Dec. 1834.

Disenchantment with the Whig ministry gave local Tories enough confidence to invite a Lord of the Admiralty, Vice Admiral Sir Charles Rowley, to stand. Given a Tory ministry, and the local anger over Graham's cuts, the Tories were confident of the outcome. They were joined by Napier, standing once again with support from anti-Carter Liberals and radicals. There was a rather unsavoury piece of vote-swapping between Napier and Rowley, which ended with Rowley coming third. Although the evidence must be treated with caution, it seems as though Baring was shocked at the methods considered normal by Rowley:

It was a close contest. Every engine of power and interest was employed against us, and I confess I had not a suspicion of the tyranny and brutality which men in office could exercise before. The Tories split with Napier, who is a ballot and triennial parliament man, etc., etc., and the dockyard voters were directed to vote for him. So much for Tory honesty <sup>1</sup>.

One's sympathy is, of course, lessened by the knowledge that Baring had happily represented a close borough for five years, and spent less than £25 on elections in that period. Nevertheless, the Tories were clearly prepared to use corrupt methods, and were prepared to drop their radical allies. Napier complained that his plumpers had agreed to a mutual split with Rowley, while Rowley's supporters had let them down; he was, he said, converted by the experience of working with Tories to the principle of the ballot (henceforth he gave his support to Baring and Carter). Rowley did not even

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<sup>1</sup>Northbrook, op.cit., p. 111; H.T., 12 Jan. 1835.

await the formal announcement of the result, with its customary speeches from the candidates, but went back to London in a huff to seek a safer seat, leaving his abrasive chairman, Dr. Quarrier, to set things right at Portsmouth. Quarrier found his comfort in the Tory victory in the southern division of the county. The break between radicals and Tories was to last a further twenty years, weakening existing alliances on issues like the poor law and the dockyard.

1837 saw the last Conservative attempt at the Borough for twenty years. Despite some grumbling about the ballot, Liberals once more backed Baring and Bonham Carter, and Napier took an advertisement in the local paper urging his supporters to vote for them. For the first time since the mid-eighteenth century, the Tories also stood two candidates: Sir George Cockburn and Lord Fitzharris. The election followed what was now a familiar pattern, with the opposition candidates winning the show of hands and the Liberals winning at the polls. What at the national level has been seen as 'a decisive trial of strength, which the Liberals lost', was in Portsmouth the end of Tory hopes.<sup>1</sup> Baring polled more than a hundred votes over Cockburn's total, with Fitzharris on his own at the bottom of the poll.

Once more, the Tories taught the Liberals a lesson in organization. Gosport watermen were brought in to help the Tory campaign; they greeted the result by stoning Baring (Bonham Carter by this time was too ill to attend, and was

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<sup>1</sup> Blake, op.cit., p. 49.



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How to reconcile "soil depth"  
p168 with "verticality, depth and  
privacy" p 169: there is at least  
a definite offset at this

p 198 was this exclusion - sp-  
with loss of the area of  
class too.

p198 Spacing - penultimate line.

p 212 word on the line 7 for foot

p 213 (approx) how does he know the no of  
units per household? (the <sup>enumerators</sup> ~~enumerators~~ would take  
account of only residential units)

p 239. should have observed for units ???

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## 6 Politics at Paris

Ref 3 p 265 - 1-10-plate

"the government" p 268.

Swedish and Norway - both in 1820?!?

Impact of Elit Reports. p 272 appx  
use Patterson.

Why should it do Roberts good to associate  
with Tories? p 275

Warrior and Talk of - p 277 || ?  
"N="?

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In that, I record that the degree be  
awarded. This thesis shall compare with  
the best work which has been done at  
the Centre since its foundation: the theses of  
Mrs Campbell, Egle, Fisher, Hays and Lundy.

represented by his cousin Edward), and then attacking a triumphal procession rashly started up by a group of carriage-owning ladies and gentlemen. Baring sarcastically wrote to his high Tory brother-in-law, the rector of Fareham:

To such a crowd it would have been absurd to have talked sense, and certainly I was not guilty of that absurdity.... Two limbs were broken and a considerable number of heads. But what signified this? It was in the cause of the Church, religion, and good order, and the Whig Radicals are revolutionists!

Liberals could take their revenge by howling down the Tory speakers during the county election hustings, with cries of 'Put him into the Waterworks' and 'Stuff him with his faggots'. Although the Tories were returned for South Hampshire, Portsdown Division showed a large Liberal vote<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps more important in the long run, the Liberals were able to view their Tory opponents as essentially immoral, prepared to use bribery and violence and acting with arrogant disregard for others. Whatever the truth of the Liberal view, it did enable them to discount the Tories and to regard them as largely irrational creatures, motivated by superstitious reverence for the past and with unscrupulous desire for place.

For twenty years the Borough was Liberal, and the Tories felt unable to contest it<sup>3</sup>. Local men, including Daniel Quarrier<sup>4</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup>Northbrook, op.cit., 127; H.T., 24, 31 July 1837.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 7, 14 Aug. 1837.

<sup>3</sup>D.C. Moore has argued that uncontested elections were the product of strong, known deference groups in constituencies. ('The Matter of the Missing Contests: Towards a Theory of the Mid-19th Century British Political System', Albion, vi, 1974, pp. 92-119). This is to give too much elasticity to an explanation that is undoubtedly far more valid for the county than the borough.

<sup>4</sup>Sun, 21 Feb. 1838 (cutting in Saunders Coll., vol. 1, p.7.)

were proposed from time to time but withdrew from the expense and ill-feeling that would have accompanied a campaign. The Liberal hold on the borough seemed immovable, in large part because the Whigs were able to attract and retain a broad supporting base, ranging from aristocrats like Sir George Grey to radicals like Bilton and Sheppard. Just to take one instance of the Carters' capacity for winning the hearts of all men, the Northern Star carried a small obituary of John Bonham Carter's death, expressing 'regret' at the loss of a man whose death was the result of 'his exertions in the popular cause. In the course of a life of unremitting activity he had secured the respect and affection of numerous friends, without ever making a personal enemy'<sup>1</sup>. Baring, very much the gentleman, who at the Admiralty spelt out his opposition to any local favouritism, was less successful at winning personal affection and respect, but was still unlikely to be repudiated by the broad coalition of interests - perhaps it can be described as a coalition of coalitions - that characterized provincial Victorian liberalism<sup>2</sup>. The unity of all true reformers was a preoccupation of Bonham Carter's, and by combining it with a certain modesty<sup>3</sup> and a ready

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<sup>1</sup>24 Feb. 1838. Perhaps had Carter died in February 1840, after the Birmingham disturbances, the line would have been different.

<sup>2</sup>The most thorough, if at times somewhat assertive, study is J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857-1868, 1966. See esp. p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>He showed little personal ambition, disliking showiness; he turned down offers of government office on at least four occasions (his father had refused a baronetcy), and insisted on a private funeral. Bonham Carter, op.cit., p. 69.

appeal to his father's memory, Bonham Carter managed to present himself as the embodiment of selfless reforming idealism.

Tories and radicals were both unable to present an alternative that would be able to attract an equally broad electoral base. The radicals might provide leg men for the Liberals, acting as canvassers and organising meetings; and they undoubtedly formed an active and vocal pressure group that looked to Manchester for its leadership, on issues like the corn laws. Tories tended to look to the county and to the armed services for outside sustenance, and could also call upon a steady group of local supporters. Part of their strength may have been the result of bribery and coercion, for they always had to hold their meetings in private and even then were by no means free from radical disruption. A number of townsmen who might have been committed Tories were probably more demoralized by the excesses of the election campaigns than they were angered by the performance of the Whig ministries.

Tories, and to a lesser extent radicals, were most effective in local government. In 1835 Portsmouth had been divided into six wards. Old Portsmouth township was the richest, still being the main commercial and social centre of the town. Southsea, then little more than a few terraces, an artizan area and some market gardens, was placed in St. Paul's Ward together with a part of the growing working class suburb of Landport; the rest of Landport and Kingston went into All

Saints Ward; Portsea was divided into two wards; and lastly, the agricultural districts were placed in a separate ward, although this was hardly warranted by the number of voters in them.

TABLE FOUR: WEALTH OF DIFFERENT ELECTORAL WARDS, 1835

Ward	No. of houses rated at £50+ per annum	Total no. of houses	Aggregate annual rental
St. Thomas (i.e. Portsmouth town)	16	1,116	£31,000
St. George (south of Queen St., Portsea)	5	2,267	£15,480
St. John (Portsea north of Queen St.)	4	2,158	£15,300
St. Paul (Southsea plus Landport south of Lake Lane)	2	3,491	£17,959
All Saints (Kingston plus Landport north of Lake Lane)	4	3,530	£17,802
St. Mary (Milton, all parts east of Landport & Southsea)	1	524	£ 8,550

(Source: Report Comm. Boundaries of Municipal Corporations)

The new wards were hotly contested by both parties, despite the local paper's hope that men from 'every political class' would be returned. In St. Thomas's ward a joint Whig-Tory slate was formed but was beaten by a list of Liberals, over the complaints of T.E. Owen who had called on reformers to unite 'with our Tory neighbours' in solving the town's

problems<sup>1</sup>. Members of the old corporation topped the poll in St. Thomas's (Edward Carter), St. George's (Daniel Howard) and St. Paul's (William Cooper). The urban wards did not elect a single Tory, although the 'pocket' ward of St. Mary's did return three Conservatives. In All Saints the poll was headed by the staymaker Thomas Jackson, who had flirted with the 'moderate reform' campaign, followed closely by William Bilton, a radical. Edward Carter was unanimously elected Mayor, to applause and emotion.

The first Tory victories in the urban wards appeared as soon as elections were held to replace the twelve Liberal aldermen. The first were in St. George's and in St. Thomas's; the latter, containing the army's administrative centre, the customs house, and the old Gun Wharf, was a customary Tory area, electing John Thomas Garrett the brewer and John Atkins the banker. Because the local press did not after the first year or so treat council elections as political affairs it is sometimes difficult to establish political identities; however, the Tories certainly built up a substantial minority of councillors (see Table 5) who gradually acquired experience in local office. Both Liberals and Conservatives were happy about the tendency to regard local government as 'nonpolitical', however much radicals might rage. The Telegraph described

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<sup>1</sup>The pamphlets issued by Owen and D.B. Price are preserved in the Saunders Coll., vol. 1, p. 1. Owen did not get onto the council until the relatively late date of 1843, despite his evident ambition.

its ideal councillor as 'a man of acute mind and sound judgement in the ordinary concerns of life..., familiar with business and practiced in its details'. This was not a party matter: 'every political class is capable of furnishing members fully qualified to perform ably and faithfully the duties of the civic office; and to proscribe any who are so qualified, merely on account of their speculative opinion on general politics, would be eminently unjust'<sup>1</sup>.

The ideal, then, was a practical business head, unbefuddled by party politics. What was the reality? A study of seventy-eight men who became councillors between 1835 and 1840 suggests that the bulk were indeed men of business, and that some were extremely successful ones. At least sixteen left over £5,000 on their death, which was a reasonable sum by the town's standards<sup>2</sup>. Thirtythree of the council members subscribed to one or more of the town's main educational charities, which suggests that they were interested in the moral and religious elevation of working people. Occupationally, as Table Six shows, they reflected the town's trading, manufacturing and professional interests. The independent and officer groups were present, but in small numbers, while Yard officials were

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 4 Nov. 1835.

<sup>2</sup>It was small beer by the standards of Bristol, where most councillors of this generation left well over that sum: G. Bush, Bristol and its Municipal Government, 1820-1851, Bristol 1976, pp. 238-45.



entirely absent. Retailers were noticeable on both sides, particularly the Liberal, and this appears to be quite unusual<sup>1</sup>.

The number from the retail group cannot be simply a reflection of their individual and collective importance in the town's elites, and may rather be an index of the pressure of rates upon all those who owned real estate; it has already been shown (above, p.133) that retailers were among the most important owners of property. Apart from the big breweries, few of Portsmouth's manufacturers owned much real estate, but rather 'put out' work to men, and often women, working in their own homes. Some industrialists even found it hard to qualify as councillors, their rateable property was worth so little: the radical sailmaker, Henry Childs, for example qualified only after some difficulty.

Two things raised the question of rates into a major issue in Portsmouth. The first was the absence of any major property, apart from the Camber, belonging to the Corporation. Bristol Council in the 1830s, for instance, could expect to receive some £7,500 per annum from rents<sup>2</sup>, reducing the amount that might have to be levied in rates. The Camber, on the other hand, was for many years a source of expenditure rather than income. Secondly, there was the absence of a single large

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<sup>1</sup>According to Fraser, retailers formed about ten per cent of Leeds council at this time (op.cit., p.129); in Bristol they were 'conspicuous by their absence' from the council, although they formed a large section of the electorate (Bush, op.cit., p. 130).

<sup>2</sup>This was equivalent to more than one quarter of all council income: Bush, ibid., pp. 157, 184. Liverpool corporation's estates were worth £100,000 per annum by 1871: A. Briggs, Victorian Cities, p. 217.

rate-paying landlord. Those towns that did have such landlords might face a number of consequences. In some cases, the landlord imposed his own men on the borough electorate<sup>1</sup>. In others, the council could soak the landlord: South Shields, for instance, welcomed the opportunity offered by public health laws of winning additional powers over the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral, who were the largest local landowners<sup>2</sup>. These options were closed to Portsmouth, where the government departments refused to pay rates until 1861 (and refuses to pay an 'economic' rate to the present day).

All businessmen - bankers, merchants, manufacturers or retailers - were more likely to sit as Liberals rather than Conservatives. This reflected more than grateful loyalty to the party of reform, free trade, and open competition for government contracts. Such issues had real meaning, especially in a dockyard town where the well-being of businessmen could be immediately affected by any government decision. It was

TABLE FIVE: POLITICAL COMPLEXION OF PORTSMOUTH COUNCIL,  
1836, 1847 and 1852

	Liberals	Conservatives	Not known
1836	49	5	1
1847	31	11	13
1852	34	12	10

Sources: CM 1/1; 1847 P.O. Directory; 1852 P.O. Directory.

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<sup>1</sup>Cannadine, op.cit., p.

<sup>2</sup>J. Smith, 'Public Health on Tyneside, 1850-1880', in N. McCord (ed.), op.cit., p. 27.

TABLE SIX: COUNCILLORS' OCCUPATIONS, 1835-40

	Liberals %	Conservatives %	All Councillor %	N=
Manufacturer	26	13	23	18
Retailer	38	27	36	28
Merchant, banker	10	7	9	7
Civilian professions	17	27	19	15
Gent., officer	6	20	10	8
Farmer	2	7	3	2
Dockyard clerk	2	0	1	1

Source: Pigot's Directory, 1830; Council Minutes, P.C.R.O.  
CM 1/1; newspapers.

important for Portsmouth, then, that businessmen could show their ability to influence politics, bring pressure onto government, carry out their own affairs independent of 'aristocratic' direction, and carry on business with as few restrictions as possible. This was the gist of Erasmus Jackson's speech to a reform meeting in Portsea in 1832:

We are asked, what good will Reform do? We reply, we are not so foolish as to imagine it a panacea - that it will clothe the naked, feed the hungry, pay the national debt, or obtain for the idle the reward of the industrious; but it will effect this good: it will prevent future extravagance, it will not saddle unworthy favorites on an overburdened people, it will throw no impediment in the way of industry, and will make the people's voice to be heard and attended to 1.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 21 May 1832.

These expectations were certainly nearer the truth than were Tory fears of blood, revolution, and more blood<sup>1</sup>.

As well as being, for the most part, businessmen and Liberals, Portsmouth's councillors tended to be at the peak of their careers. The average age of Liberals was 47, of Conservatives 46, in those cases where it could be discovered. The first generation of councillors seem to have been figures whose position in the community was already established. Although only a minority are recorded as subscribers to any educational foundation, they were a sizeable minority; moreover, many National Schools left no records. Even those who did not subscribe to the schools were often members of the Beneficial Society, a charitable-cum-friendly society that ran schools in Portsea. Given that these figures are likely to underestimate the numbers subscribing to educational charities, do they still tell us anything?

TABLE SEVEN: COUNCILLORS' SUPPORT FOR EDUCATIONAL CHARITIES,  
1835-40

	Liberal %	Conservative %	All Councillors %	N=
Lancasterian only	24	7	21	16
National only	6	27	10	8
Both Lancasterian and National	16	0	13	10
Marine Orphans only	0	7	1	1
None	54	60	56	40

Sources: Annual Reps. of the Lancasterian Institute, the National Schools at Portsea and Portsmouth, Marine Orphans School.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Croker: 'My opinion is that a democracy, once set a-going, must sooner or later work itself out till it ends in anarchy, and that some kind of despotism must then come to restore society': memo of 15 Mar. 1833, in Pool (ed.), op.cit., p. 161.

They suggest that Liberals tended rather more often to support educational enterprises than did Tories, and that they were far more likely to subscribe to two or more educational charities than were Tories. The implication is that, not only for religious reasons, they were keener to encourage schooling for working class children than were Tories. Second, almost all the Conservative support for schooling was confined to Anglican institutions. Only two Conservatives subscribed to either the Lancasterian Institution or the Seamen and Marines' Orphans School, both of which were non-denominational (although the Lancasterians were mostly nonconformists). While Liberals, not all of whom were dissenters, valued education as such, the Conservatives were quite clear about the conditions upon which education was to be made available.

Perhaps most important is something that the figures can only hint at: the Liberals saw themselves as natural leaders of the community. As such, it was their duty to work for and subscribe to the charities. A few examples should fill out this suggestion. Edward Carter, for instance, subscribed to the Lancasterian Institute, the Portsmouth National School, and the Portsea National School; he was also on the Lancasterian Committee. Besides this, Carter had been an active member of the Literary and Philosophical Society, an honorary member of the Beneficial Society, and an official of the General Dispensary, the Eye and Ear Dispensary, and the Humane Society; he was also a friend and encourager of John Pounds. Daniel Howard was treasurer of the Lancasterian

Institute, had been the Literary and Philosophical Society's president, the Hampshire Library's secretary, and was also an official of both dispensaries and the Humane Society; he had been a member of the Beneficial Society since 1796. Even William Bilton, a rather more humble figure, a methodist, was on the committee of both the Lancasterian and the Marines' Orphans schools, and belonged to the Literary and Philosophical Society. Activities such as this were the visible foundation of the claims of these Liberal businessmen and professionals to be recognized as social leaders; not through birth, but by intrinsic worth manifested through enlightened works.

Claims to local social leadership were expressed manifestly through political activity, and it is worth noting that almost all the early Liberal councillors had some sort of experience in reform activity. A small minority (see Table Eight) had been active in the 1820s or before, even though the records are at their most intractable in these years. Howard was undoubtedly the veteran, with his jacobin experiences. Almost sixty per cent of the Liberal councillors had been active during the reform campaign of 1831-32, either on the election committees, or in the petition to the Lords in 1832. Some, such as Casher, had been Napier supporters, and others such as Thomas Jackson had lent their names to the Tories' 'moderate reform' campaign.

Most Tory councillors, on the other hand, lacked experience. This was not true of all: Dr. Quarrier had long been an

TABLE EIGHT: COUNCILLORS' POLITICAL EXPERIENCES, 1835-40

(a) LIBERALS

	% Active in %
Pre-1822 activities	6
Election Committees of 1831-2 only	29
Election Committees plus Lords petition organiser	29
Petition organiser only	5
Post 1832 activities only	6
Napier supporter	3
Tory connections	3
No record of activity	19

N= 63

(b) CONSERVATIVES

	%
Pre-1822 activities	7
'Moderate reform' or county election committees, 1831-2	33
Napier supporter	7
Post 1832 only	7
No record	47

N= 15

Sources: local press.

active campaigner against radicals. His enthusiasm had in 1832 led him to try to suppress a meeting of Gosport radicals, sending constables round to monitor it when he was unable to prevent it altogether. The radicals, who may have known of Quarrier's intentions, had meanwhile asked William Grant sr. to chair their meeting; Grant, a banker and county justice, was not amused when the constables appeared, grumbling that 'We are such a restless radical set, that the presence of

constables is required to keep us in order', telling the officers 'Well, should I misconduct myself, you will know what to do with me'<sup>1</sup>. Most Tories lacked Quarrier's experience and power; opportunities for anything more than the occasional petition had been few and far between in pre-reform Portsmouth, and governments were probably loath to appoint local Tories in large numbers to the county bench. Lastly, the Conservative councillors contained one man whose record was unambiguously radical: William Atfield, who in 1831 had been on the Liberal county election committee, in 1833 joined William Bilton in demanding that 'inhabitant householders...be eligible to vote for the election of all corporate officers, and more particularly magistrates'<sup>2</sup>, and in 1834 publicly supported Charles Napier. Atfield's hostility towards the Whigs was sparked off by resentment at the harbour dues fixed by the old Corporation; in response, he took a wharf at Gosport and moved his coal and timber business across the harbour to escape the dues. He was a boisterous character, and soon joined the long list of local men who upset the barrack-major, J.O. Travers, whom he called a 'blackguard' in the council chamber. In both his language and his occupation, Atfield was not a typical Portsmouth Tory.

This picture of the councillors is by no means exhaustive, and by no means does justice to their variety. Yet it

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<sup>1</sup> H.T., 16 Jan. 1832.

<sup>2</sup> H.T., 4 Mar. 1833.



gives us some idea of their jobs, their wealth, their standing in the community, and helps explain their pre-occupations. Four chief issues arose: the burden of the rates; the commercial development of the borough; the preservation of public order; and the promotion of reform measures. Some of these issues were fairly direct questions of economic interest, while others clearly involved issues of political principle. If the councillors were propertied men, they were also Liberals in a town where the presence of the state was daily visible, and this too affected their practice as council members.

Despite the presence of a small group of Tories, debates on Liberal policy issues were rarely rancorous. Rather than opposing motions on these issues, Conservatives tended to argue that they were outside the council's proper competence and should not be discussed at all. When John Sheppard proposed a petition for the gradual abolition of the corn laws (Sheppard was himself an advocate of total and immediate repeal), the Conservative William Stigant complained that this was a 'political question', which even were it not, 'went far beyond the brains possessed by the Members of this Council (cries of oh! oh!)'<sup>1</sup>. Stigant also objected when Lang and Bilton denounced the government's treatment of Ireland<sup>2</sup>. There was scarcely a year when the council did

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 10 Feb. 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Council Minutes, P.C.R.O. CM 1/1, 30 May 1836.

not protest against the disabilities on British-born Jews; these were generally unanimous in the early years, but in 1844 T.E. Owen and Stigant objected to the matter being raised; they were defeated by twentyfive votes to six<sup>1</sup>. The council continued to support Jewish emancipation until 1858<sup>2</sup>. Throughout these years the council pursued liberal and radical aims: supporting a public investigation into the persecution of eastern Jews; opposing the educational clauses of Sir James Graham's Factory Act, which would have given control of mass schooling into the hands of the anglican church; against the corn laws; against corporal punishment in the armed forces (another 'question of general politics' that Owen and Stigant objected to)<sup>3</sup>. The running on these issues was normally made by radicals: Bilton and Sheppard often proposed the resolutions, while older Whigs such as Howard might abstain or even vote in favour. To win support, radicals often had to withdraw from their own positions onto broader ground, and the action that followed was usually a petition rather than direct engagement with existing pressure groups.

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<sup>1</sup>CM 1/1, 8 Feb. 1836, 19 Jan. 1838; CM 1/2, 1 Mar. 1841, 5 Feb. 1844.

<sup>2</sup>Emanuel Emanuel was proposed in 1835, but withdrew tactfully; he was elected in 1841, but David Price challenged his willingness to take the oaths and he resigned; Emanuel entered the Council in 1844. Saunders Coll., vol. 1, p.8; H.T., 21 Dec. 1835; P.C.R.O. CE 8/8, 4 Apr. 1841; CM 1/2, 13 Mar. 1844.

<sup>3</sup>CM 1/2, 20 July 1840, 10 May 1841, 1 May 1843, 1 Feb. 1847. The factory education bill (hardly a great issue in Portsmouth, whose local industries were not subject to legislation) is discussed in J.T. Ward, op.cit., pp.194-204; and J.H. Treble, 'The Reaction of Chartism in the North of England to the Factory Education Bill of 1843', Journal of Educational Administration and History, vi, 1973-74, pp. 1-9.

Commercial development of the port was, naturally, an issue well before the 1835 Act<sup>1</sup>. There were demands for the new Council to apply the tolls equally upon all users of the Camber (previously, burgesses had been exempt), to reduce charges and improve facilities, to keep rates down in general, and to pay only those council employees who worked for the council. The subject was close to most councillors' hearts. The noisome and dilapidated Camber was developed at a cost of some 30,000, to include a wet dock, a slipway, new cranes, and dredging of mud, rubbish and sewage, and so on<sup>2</sup>. The accounts were investigated, and as a direct result of the discoveries made the harbour master was dismissed for corruption, and several burgesses received claims for unpaid dues. It was decided that 'as in future the Tolls will not be applied to the use of a select body, but for the general benefit of the public, a proper and equal collection should be enforced'<sup>3</sup>. A new pier was erected at the Old Beef Stage (which ran out from the sally port that gave access to the High Street); this also became a hot political issue, the Liberals William Owen and Henry Childs losing their seats to two Tories when it was discovered that they had tried to stop the High Street pier and get one at Point instead; there were few electors on Point<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the Owen/Price pamphlets, Saunders Coll., cit.

<sup>2</sup>P.C.R.O., CCR 24 Sept. 1838, 10 Nov. 1845, 1 Apr. 1839.

<sup>3</sup>CM 1/1, 20 Mar., 17 Apr., 25 Sept. 1837; CCR 22 Feb. 1836 (Finance Committee). William Peirce, a liberal councillor, was among those sued.

<sup>4</sup>Childs and H. Owen were radicals, John Garratt and John Atkins were the Tories. H.T., 31 Oct. 1836, W.G. Gates op.cit., p. 89.

Private ventures too were watched so that the 'interests of the public' might be protected. The Floating Bridge Company (whose chairman was the Tory Quarrier) won the council's support only after it was sure that it would not obstruct the harbour entrance. While the council was keenly in favour of a railway link between the town and London, it was also concerned that the link should be direct. The alternative, a junction from the L.S.W.R., would have meant that Southampton, although geographically further from the capital, would have the shorter railway route; the L.S.W.R. junction would also have bled off the profits to shareholders living in London, Southampton and Lancashire<sup>1</sup>. The council also campaigned for a court for the recovery of small debts, something that would chiefly benefit shopkeepers who had allowed customers and sometimes suppliers to live on loans or credit.

It is arguable that these were the first attempts to develop the town's economy as a whole. Previously, the corporation had been interested only in revenues arising from its own property, rather than using its position to encourage the town's commerce. The dockyard was largely self-contained, and it was widely believed that changing governments were deliberately restricting the borough's commercial development<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. has of course enormous numbers of references. Course, op.cit., passim; and CM 1/2, passim, but esp. 4 May 1840, 14 May 1845.

<sup>2</sup>In 1833 the Rev. Henry Hawkes was told that 'Government have always set themselves against encouraging merchant shipping at Portsmouth. They have always seemed desirous to preserve our port ... for the Royal Navy': Recollections of John Pounds, 1884, p. 16. It seems unlikely, except in the most general sense.

It goes without saying that 'the economy as a whole' meant a capitalist economy, which is to say no more than that capitalism was seen as, if anyone thought about it at all, the 'natural' way to achieve commercial prosperity. The council, as was shown in chapter Three, always preferred to find a private entrepreneur even when capital equipment was provided socially, from the rates. When no private entrepreneur came forward, the council took over the dry dock with reluctance. Yet commitment to private capitalism did not mean that councillors envisaged that individual capitalists would be the only beneficiaries. Their policies were believed to be those of a 'public' that stood in contrast with the regard for 'private' interests that had characterized the old corporation<sup>1</sup>. Much the same can be said of the way that the council treated the preservation of public order (see chapter Ten, where the development of policing is dealt with in detail). Broadly speaking, it was a way of life that was being protected by the borough police from the 1830s, rather than the interests of individuals. It is one of the characteristics of 'middle class consciousness' in this period that it denied the moral validity of class consciousness as such<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>On the question of the distinction between 'capitalist' as a personification, and the 'capitalist mode of production' as a global force, see Hobsbawm, Age of Capital, pp. 291-3; and G. Stedman Jones's review of the same: 'Society and Politics at the beginning of the World Economy', Cambridge Journal of Economics, i, 1977, pp. 84-6.

<sup>2</sup>Stedman Jones, ibid. As Briggs, 'Middle class consciousness in English Politics, 1780-1846', Past & Present, ix 1956, pp. 65-74.

Rates were, as ever, a furiously debated issue. Yet even this area, in which one might think that naked economic interests would be shamelessly exposed, is complicated by other less instrumental considerations. Above all, rating was very much a political issue, since the number of rate-payers determined the municipal and poor law electorates while rateable values affected parliamentary elections and improvement commissions<sup>1</sup>. This gave the parish vestries some at least of their power, since they elected the rating officers who then drew up the list of names upon which the burgess rolls were based. The ratebook was a hot political property. At least once, in 1836, there were furious complaints that a Tory proxy overseer had placed several Tories onto the parliamentary electors' roll, although their property values were in fact too low<sup>2</sup>. In 1839 the board of guardians and the parish fought a battle over which had the right to appoint rate collectors (resolved by legislation in favour of the Guardians: see chapter Eight). Given the absence of corporate property, the government's refusal to pay rates on its own industries, and the poor rate burden caused by the town's economic structure, rating was a pressing question. In 1845 T.E. Owen demanded that the council draw

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<sup>1</sup>D. Fraser, op.cit., chs. iii, iv and vi; J.H. Prest, Politics in the Age of Cobden, 1977, ch. ii.

<sup>2</sup>The offending overseer was Henry Ford, a solicitor. H.T., 21 Nov., 5, 12, 19 Dec. 1836.

the Ordnance Board's attention to the state of its roads and bridges, reminding them that the Crown's property (unless used for private dwelling) was untaxed. As soon as the public health question arose in the 1850s, there were constant attempts to make the government include a rate on its own property before the council would even consider the Act<sup>1</sup>. There was constant squabbling that took place whenever a borough rate was proposed. In 1853, for instance, there was a call for a 5½d rate by the Finance Committee; in response, two radicals (David Levy and Argent Blundell) proposed a 1d rate. The 5½d rate won by nineteen votes to Levy and Blundell's eighteen, but since any rate required an absolute majority of the Council it fell; the Finance Committee had to reduce their demand by ½d before they could win enough votes to pass a rate.

The rates issue shows that politics could include other areas than the council, such as the board of guardians and the parish vestry. The guardians are dealt with later, but it should be mentioned that the first elections to the board took place with both parties presenting lists of candidates. On the whole the politics of the town meeting or the board of highways was the politics of men who were too poor to be able to stand for the Council, certainly with any hope of success, and were often too poor to be able to vote in

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<sup>1</sup>CM 1/2, 5 May 1845; CM 1/3, 7 Mar., 5 May, 2 June, 4, 11 Aug. 1851, 2, 9, Feb., 22 Mar. 1852, 7, 21 Feb. 1853.

parliamentary elections, sometimes even in municipal ones. The use of such institutions for political ends was often regarded with disgust by men who were able to engage in parliamentary or municipal affairs. Indeed, their functions were often scarcely political in nature, and control of them for political activists could do little more than represent a demand for recognition at other levels.

The vestries were the most vehemently contested of local institutions outside the councils themselves<sup>1</sup>. Two Portsmouth parishes had vestries: the old township of Portsmouth was covered by St. Thomas's parish church and most of the rest of the island by St. Mary's. St. Thomas's was the more static community, and also that which contained an influential group of wealthy ratepayers; in St. Mary's, wealthy men were lost in a sea of small traders and masters and working men. The old township was changing, as its population declined with the construction of new barracks and stores, and as High Street lost some of its old economic predominance to Queen Street<sup>2</sup>. However, it continued to include the customs officials, watermen, servicemen and their families, the Lieutenant Governor and his household, merchants and bankers, as well as the vagrants and other shady characters that hung around 'Oakum Bay' (apparently a piece of wasteland near the workhouse).

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<sup>1</sup>Vestry politics are discussed in D. Fraser, op.cit., ch.i; 'Areas of Urban Politics: Leeds, 1830-80', in H.J. Dyos & M. Wolff (eds.), The Victorian City: Images and Realities, vol. 2, 1973, pp. 765-9; J. Foster, op.cit., pp. 56-64.

<sup>2</sup>J. Webb, 'An Early Victorian Street: The High Street, Old Portsmouth', Portsmouth Papers, xxvi, 1977, p. 22.



The names that dominated the vestry in St. Thomas's parish were Tory ones. The families of Arnaud (customs officials), Atkins (bankers) and Deacon (merchants, brewers and newspaper publishers) often provided the parochial officers. The opposition consisted chiefly of radicals, and since neither Tories nor radicals had an exaggerated respect for the rules of polite society this could lead to highly spectacular disputes. In 1841, for instance, Henry Deacon, the retiring churchwarden publicly whipped the radical printer David Brent Price, claiming that Price had insulted his wife. What Price had actually said, in his unstamped paper, was that Deacon 'made a fool of every woman who was ever weak enough to honour him with her intimacy'<sup>1</sup>. Price challenged the church rate in 1833, losing in a poll of ratepayers (it should be remembered that there was multiple voting, proportionate to the rateable value of one's property) by 148 votes to seventy; in 1834 he complained that there was a charge on the rate for wardens' dinners, repeating the charge in 1837; the radicals won a vote against the 1838 rate in the vestry, but were defeated at the poll, and this was repeated in 1840<sup>2</sup>. In 1837 there was a campaign against the principle of church rates, led by Whigs including Edward Carter; in its wake a number of radicals withheld their rates.

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<sup>1</sup>D.B. Price, The Church, pt. i, 1840, p. 7. Semaphore, 1 June 1840.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 11 Nov. 1833, 28 Apr. 1834, 22 May, 11 Sept. 1837, 28 May, 11 June 1838, 1 June 1840.

At least one, Isaac Jeffery, a unitarian grocer, was hauled before the courts where he was defended by the congregation-alist attorney Nathaniel Griffin<sup>1</sup>.

The principle of multiple voting and the strength of the anglicans meant that Portsmouth radicals were unable to defeat the church rate, nor could they break the Tory hold over the parish offices. Price's own politics became increasingly hysterical as he was unable to make any impact either on the Tory parish or on the Whig borough. In 1841 he was taken to court for a libel in his unstamped paper upon Major Joseph Oates Travers, the barrack major, and after some pressure gave an undertaking not to trouble Travers any more:

The truth is, my Lord [Price told the judge], I am of such a nervous temperament, that I cannot keep out of excitement, and I am consequently going to leave Portsmouth, and retire into the country. It is essential that I should do so. My friends consider that my mental powers are impaired.

Mr Justice Maule - You are quite right to retire into the country, and do not trouble yourself about patriotism; take care of your own private affairs and let the country take care of itself; attend to your health and that of your family.

Mr Price - I am much obliged to your Lordship for your humanity. 2

Price indeed left for Surrey, where he henceforward seems to have described himself as a 'Gentleman'. But after this piece of public humiliation, it is reassuring to know that he did not take the judge's advice to forget 'about patriotism', but instead wrote occasionally to the moral-force Chartist paper, Lloyd's Weekly, and even attacked the

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<sup>1</sup>The rate was paid anonymously, without Jeffery's consent: H.T., 20 Feb., 6 Mar. 1837.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 19 July 1841.

Portsmouth magistrates including Travers<sup>1</sup>. While in Portsmouth, Price had been the most flamboyant figure in the vestry opposition, and through his unstamped paper had contributed to the formation of the local radical movement. A unitarian himself, he found the church condemned by its association with the aristocratic, wealthy, militaristic and conservative; by the early 'forties he was looking back nostalgically to the 'useful and kindly' religion of Henville<sup>2</sup>. The present Vicar was accused of canvassing and of bringing in the influence of the Lieutenant Governor. The truth was that Price was able to find only limited support among those entitled to vote at a poll.

The radicals, weak and isolated in old Portsmouth township, were more successful elsewhere in the borough, where they could build on traditions of dissent, irreligion, and class consciousness. Apart from St Mary's itself, which was a tottering old relic of the twelfth century, the parish was provided with two proprietary chapels and two 'commissioners' churches'<sup>3</sup>. Once more the church rates were a heated issue. John Sheppard (a unitarian radical) and William Lang first

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<sup>1</sup>Travers and two other J.P.s had given a young boy two weeks' hard labour for stealing three walnuts (value 1d) from a tree belonging to Col. H.D. Campbell. Lloyds Weekly London Newspaper, 27 Oct. 1844. The previous issue also contains a piece by Price. Price, a printer, had at one time been in partnership with Henry Hollingsworth (H. Chronicle, 28 Dec. 1818, H.T. 27 May 1820). He was made a Burgess in 1833, so presumably had friends among the Whigs.

<sup>2</sup>Price, The Church, cit.

<sup>3</sup>Anon., The Parish Church of St Mary, Portsea, 1974, p.3. The 'Commissioners' Churches' were so-called because they were partly funded by the govt.

won a vestry vote against the rate in 1833, apparently by a large majority, although the two church wardens simply went ahead and signed the rate anyway, the Tory chairman having refused to accept the vote<sup>1</sup>. In 1834 Sheppard and George W. Law, an estate agent and pawnbroker from Landport, again won the show of hands in the vestry, but the poll gave 1,034 votes in favour of the rate to 588 against<sup>2</sup>. The obstacle to radical victory, it was decided, was the parish officials. In 1836 they challenged the anglican nominee for the second warden (the first warden was appointed by the vicar), and their candidate - a Wesleyan, Stephen Reeves - won by 118 votes to 65 against the Tory Henry Ford<sup>3</sup>.

The most outstanding victory for the radicals came in 1837, when John Sheppard himself was elected as people's warden. Sheppard's poll was vulnerable, a mere 72 votes (against the 16 given to his opponent, Henry Ford), and the radicals' lack of confidence can be seen in their decision to close the voting after one hour<sup>4</sup>. To the vicar's fury, Sheppard was re-elected in the following year by 756 votes to 487, although the vicar (as chairman) had insisted that the poll last for two days. Once again his opponent was the Tory Ford;

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 21 Oct. 1833.

<sup>2</sup>St Mary's Vestry Minutes, 29 Oct. 1834, P.C.R.O. CHU 3/2 E/

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 11 Apr. 1836; CHU 3/2 E/2, 5 Apr. 1836.

<sup>4</sup>CHU 3/2 E/2, 28 Mar. 1837; H.T., 3 Apr. 1837.

however, Sheppard's supporters were not just the radicals of previous years, but included Major Travers and Thomas Jackson. From this time there could be no doubt about the vestry's mood. As Sheppard declared in his speech before the poll, 'I would never be a party to making a Church Rate .... I am opposed to Church Rates because the Church of England is a rich and powerful body'<sup>1</sup>. When he called upon the Vestry to organise a voluntary collection towards the church's upkeep, the Vicar angrily refused it. In 1841 the churchwardens had to hold a whip-round to cover their expenses, but could raise only £155 of the £769 needed; the vestry refused to allow the vicar to add their names to an appeal for funds to rebuild the church in case it made them legally responsible<sup>2</sup>. A poll in 1842 produced 1,318 votes against a rate and only 768 for it, and in 1843 the vicar organized a petition to Parliament against the existing law<sup>3</sup>. There never was another rate in Portsea parish, although a couple of Portsea inhabitants who came within the St Thomas's boundaries found themselves before the courts for refusing to pay the rates of that parish<sup>4</sup>. Sheppard retired from what had no doubt become a boring and burdensome post in 1841, and Richard Batchelor, a surgeon and an anglican but an opponent of church rates, replaced him<sup>5</sup>. Batchelor sat until 1849; in

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<sup>1</sup>CHU 3/2 E/2, 17 Apr. 1838; H.T., 27 Apr. 1838.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 1 Feb., 6 Dec. 1841.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 30 May 1842, 13 Feb. 1843.

<sup>4</sup>J.J. Curtis, corn merchant, had some beans seized in 1843; Alderman Bilton dubbed these the 'consecrated beads': P.C.R.O. CHU 2/2 C, item 4.

<sup>5</sup>CHU 3/2 E/2, 13 Apr. 1841.

1850 he won the show of hands as usual, but the Tories demanded a poll for their candidate (C.B. Smith, a farmer at Milton who employed fifteen men and nine women on what was the fairly small total of twenty three acres), who won by 876 votes to 492<sup>1</sup>. By 1853 the radicals had returned, and were unchallenged for some years. By the late fifties, however, the Tory farming interest had won back the post and retained it unchallenged for the rest of our period<sup>2</sup>. Provided there was no rate, which there was not, the post was more or less honorific; it included laundering surplices and so on among its duties, and one imagines that these were things that dissenters and radicals were happy to leave to the Conservatives.

The vestry ceased, once the anglicans gave up any hopes of a rate, to be a source of political power for the otherwise unenfranchised. Otherwise the 'voice of the people' could only be heard via the public meeting - whether a town meeting, formally convened under the mayor's name and chairmanship, or the meeting of an organized pressure group or party. Aside from the two main parties, in the mid-thirties there seems to have been only one organization. This was the Landport Reform Association, set up by William Bilton, Henry Tichborne, and councillor G.W. Laws after a public meeting

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2 Apr. 1850.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., passim.

in June 1835. Bilton had earlier been dissuaded from setting up a Political Union, and was now able to campaign independently of the Whigs, for municipal reform, civil and religious liberty, and the ballot<sup>1</sup>. The L.R.A. was finally established as a formal organization in late 1837, with a low subscription (1s a year), and the aims of traditional democratic liberalism: to watch registration, defend possible victims of intimidation, extend the franchise, demand triennial parliaments, and to support the ballot<sup>2</sup>.

Primarily a discussion body, the L.R.A. also tried to affect local and parliamentary elections, partly by helping voters to register<sup>3</sup>, and also by direct intervention. In 1839 four candidates for the council, including John Sheppard (secretary to the L.R.A.), were elected unopposed after issuing a manifesto pledging support for the promotion of household suffrage and abolition of the corn laws<sup>4</sup>. In the same year they considered asking Captain Dundas to stand for the borough, but when Dundas replied that he was already committed to stand for Greenwich they agreed to support existing candidates provided they would commit themselves to at least one pledge out of the following: abolition of the

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 1 June 1835.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 25 Dec. 1837.

<sup>3</sup>Registration is discussed in Prest, op.cit., esp. ch. iii.

<sup>4</sup>H.T., 14 Oct. 1839.

corn laws, abolition of church rates, household suffrage, triennial parliaments, the ballot. A petition in support of the ballot was organised.

It would be wrong to judge the radicals' strength by their level of activity. Connected by political principle and personal sympathy with plebian democracy, if they wanted to retain their influence inside the town's existing political structures they had to line up behind the Whigs. Given the fears and special circumstances that surrounded work in the Yard, radicals found themselves unable to count on a working class following of the type that supported Attwood or Sturges in Birmingham, Cobbett or Fielden in Oldham. Their weakness was exposed when they tried to get Baring to commit himself to one of the pledges in the L.R.A. programme: Baring evaded answering most of the points, and refused outright to support the ballot<sup>1</sup>. Nonetheless, Bilton sat on Baring's election committee, while Edward Carter apparently made a deal which led to Sheppard agreeing to speak on Baring's behalf during the campaign. 'Real radicals' in the L.R.A. denounced Sheppard as the 'Unitarian Blunderbuss', his followers as 'sheep with a shepherd'; the leading 'Real Radical', Lieut. Henry Walker, R.N., was expelled from the Association for writing a letter to the conservative Portsea Pioneer criticising the 'Whig Radicals'<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>The cause of the election was Baring's appointment to the Treasury.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 20 May, 3 June, 2 Sept; Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Free Press, 13 June; Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Pioneer, 6, 20, 27 Sept. 1839.



The year 1839 has been described by D.J. Rowe as 'Chartism's most effective year in the north'<sup>1</sup>. In Portsmouth, it was a debacle.

Radical weakness, however, was only relative. As the Whigs recognised in their eagerness to retain the support of the leading radicals, many working people and small businessmen, thinking of themselves as members of the 'industrious classes', sympathized with radical positions. The Whigs had discovered this when radicals started to raise the question of the ballot, with Napier's benediction, after the corrupt 1837 election. The radicals managed to organise a town meeting on the subject in 1838, chaired by Daniel Howard, and very well-attended by all accounts. Among the principal speakers were several leaders of the L.R.A. (including Sheppard, Bilton and George Law), Henry Childs (sailmaker), and a smith from the dockyard called George Cotsell. The temper of the audience is given in this report of the reception given to the Tory Kempster Knapp, a master in the Navy, when he tried to speak:

No one requires the ballot but he who has neither independence or spirit, and who glories in hypocrisy (Interruption) - who admired the ballot more than Ropespierre? I say the ballot is calculated to lower the public spirit of this country, and bring it down to French republicanism (Loud laughter and interruption). The ballot is a delusion altogether; the Radicals are the bribers, not the Tories (Continued laughter). I move as an amendment that the Chairman be now requested to dissolve the meeting (Roars of laughter) and if anyone present who is opposed to the ballot, does

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<sup>1</sup> 'Tyneside Chartism', in N. McCord (ed.), op.cit., p.73.

not hold up his hand in favour of this amendment,  
he is a traitor to his country (Shouts of laughter).

Poor Knapp did not even find a seconder, and an amendment from 'Real Radicals' which favoured the existing system which permitted non-electors to put pressure upon electors, won only five votes. Within five days the petition drawn up by the meeting had accumulated 1,680 signatures; even Howard, from the chair, had quietly indicated his support<sup>1</sup>. The Whigs could hardly open their mouths in public without a radical jumping up to demand that they give an opinion on the ballot. Even Baring and Bonham Carter's successor, Sir George Staunton, who had decided views against the ballot, had to maintain a public fiction of open-mindedness<sup>2</sup>. If the radicals were too weak to build up an organized movement of their own, they were strong enough to make the Whigs aware of the need to placate them.

There was a certain amount of continuity between the L.R.A. and the nascent Chartist movement. Initially the Landport group was hostile: John Sheppard told one meeting that 'if the government had taken the proper course, the Chartists would never have been established'<sup>3</sup>. Feargus O'Connor addressed a meeting in 1836 in protest at the newspaper duties; only 200 attended; after O'Connor they heard Henry Tichborne of the L.R.A. group urge them not to break the law or in anyway

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 19 Feb. 1838.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., H.T. 26 Feb. 1838.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 20 May 1839.

divide the ranks of reform<sup>1</sup>. Portsmouth Chartism was still non-existent when Bronterre O'Brien was sent down as missionary to the south coast from the Convention in London, and the organization had to be carried out by a Brighton man called Reeve; there was also some difficulty in finding a chairman. The adoption of the Charter by the meeting was proposed by Reeve, and seconded by a Chichester man named Osborne. The Brighton Chartists' description of their organisation as 'leader of the agitation in the south' was unquestionably justified<sup>2</sup>.

The O'Brien meeting gave some hope to local radical reformers. Local men spoke in favour of the Charter, including a beer-shopkeeper named Jelly who had worked in the Yard for some years. The chairman was one James Cantelo, a machine smith. Two thousand people were said to have attended, and their response to O'Brien was as enthusiastic as that orator could expect<sup>3</sup>. The Charter won 1,200 signatures at Portsea and a further 600 at Gosport. Nearly one thousand more turned up to the Beneficial Society to hear less exalted names appeal for a change of ministry<sup>4</sup>. Further evidence of enthusiasm came in the following year, when the mayor had to chair a

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 11 Apr. 1836.

<sup>2</sup>T. Kemnitz, Chartism in Brighton, Sussex Ph.D, 1969, p. 155. There was also more life in Southampton than in Portsmouth: A. Temple Patterson, op.cit., vol. ii, pp. 32, 37-8.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Kemnitz, op.cit., ch. vi.

<sup>4</sup>H.T., 8 Apr; Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Free Press, 4 Apr., 4, 30 May 1839. The first report of a local W.M.A comes in Southern Star, 8 Mar. 1840.

town meeting called by the Chartists to denounce the police force<sup>1</sup>. Although there were no delegates from Hampshire to the Chartist conference in Manchester that year, by 1842 the L.R.A. activists had developed close relations with the Chartists. Thomas Ross, a councillor, and Alderman Bilton both featured among the movers of resolutions at a meeting of the 'industrious classes' in March 1842 (rather to Bilton's chagrin as his record of support for Chartism prevented him from being elected Mayor for 1843)<sup>2</sup>.

Although Portsmouth Chartism did receive a certain amount of support from 'petty bourgeois' radicals, on the whole it was a working class phenomenon. Peter McDouall, who addressed a meeting there in 1841, was impressed by the contrast he found with the 'middle class men and men of considerable property' who supported the Charter in Newport, I.o.W.:

In Portsmouth, I found more Chartist workmen, and fewer Chartist electors.... No public hall could be procured in Portsmouth. The racket court was procured, and a very large meeting convened. Such a circumstance is very gratifying to the lovers of the cause, because the mass of the workmen are government men; and the borough itself, for patronage and what not,

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<sup>1</sup>Northern Star, 1 Aug. 1840; H.T., 14 June 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Despite his Chartist connections, Bilton got 24 votes and his rival 20. Had Bilton voted for himself he would have received enough votes to ensure his election (and indeed his rival was to vote for himself some years later in a tied aldermanic election). Instead, a compromise candidate (James Hoskins) was made mayor. H.T., 7 Nov. 1842; P.C.R.O. 11 A/20/104; CM 1/2, 9, 10 Nov. 1842.

is, in reality, a pocket appendage of the ministry. The spark of Chartism has fallen in the dockyard, and has even reached the heart of honest Jack, with his mouldy biscuit and press-gang scourge <sup>1</sup>.

There was indeed some Chartist sympathy among yard men and possibly seamen as well, for William Sherratt Ellis, a Chartist prisoner awaiting transportation on a hulk in the harbour, gave copies of the Northern Star to the sailors, and correspondence and newspapers were smuggled to Ellis from J.D. Leggatt, a Portsea watchmaker and local agent for O'Brien's Southern Star<sup>2</sup>. But the predominantly working class nature of local Chartism together with very real fears of intimidation, made it a weak movement. In 1848 the Landport branch of the National Land Company seems to have subscribed less than did Newport on the Isle of Wight<sup>3</sup>.

The weakness of Portsmouth Chartism was due to two factors. First was the absence of an autonomous working class political tradition, which in turn was a result of the local industrial structure. The mass of small workshops had little in common with the Yard, and the town's economy as a whole was subordinate to political rather than economic fluctuations. The prosperity of the entire town depended upon the Yard;

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<sup>1</sup>McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal, 26 June 1841.

<sup>2</sup>English Chartist Circular and Temperance Record, vol. iii, nos. 150, 153, 1843; Southern Star, 19 Jan. 1840.

<sup>3</sup>Northern Star, 1848, passim.

one rational way of responding to cuts in the workforce, for instance, was to organize a public meeting in which shopkeepers, merchants and shipwrights could present a common position to the Admiralty. In 1833, for instance, a meeting at the Beneficial Society's hall in Portsea, chaired by the Mayor (William Cooper), petitioned against reductions in the workforce and the use of convicts. The organizing committee included Howard, Tichborne, Erasmus Jackson and Nathaniel Griffin; they managed to attract 1,430 signatures. Another town meeting in 1836 followed the same pattern<sup>1</sup>. There was a well-established tradition of cooperation between yard workmen and middle class political leaders.

Inside the yard itself, Chartist activity was likely to lead to victimization, as Henry Johnson discovered when he wrote to the moral force paper, the Free Press, in his capacity as secretary to the shipwrights' representative committee<sup>2</sup>. Far from coming out in support of the Charter in 1848, yard workers at Portsmouth, enrolled as Volunteers, acted as guards while the regular regiments went to defend the capital from imminent revolution. Shipwrights and turners made 3,000 truncheons and staves to arm special constables. On

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 8 Apr. 1833, 12 Dec. 1836.

<sup>2</sup>See below, ch. vii for details.

13 April the Admiralty Secretary wrote to the Yard Superintendent that

the diligent attention paid to the order for the manufacture of Constables Staves, and the ample supply the skill & activity of the Workmen enabled them to furnish, and the exertions with which they were forwarded to London, has been most satisfactory to their Lordships 1.

In particular, the Admiralty was impressed with 'the cheerfulness and promptitude with which the artificers have afforded their aid in the maintenance of order and law, and in support of the institutions of the country'. This was a message that had enough publicity value to be inserted in the Telegraph, no doubt to the comfort of those who had quivered at the thought of Kennington Common<sup>2</sup>. The Yard workforce was, in its relations to the community, prepared to accept middle class leadership and aid; in its relations with the Admiralty, it was bound by paternalist working conditions and the threat of instant dismissal for miscreants.

A second factor weakening the Chartists in Portsmouth was the continuing tradition of radical-liberal cooperation. While the radicals flirted briefly with the Chartists in 1839-42, by 1848 they seem to have become indifferent. Some may have been hostile: Bilton, for instance, brought an

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<sup>1</sup>N.M.M. POR/15, 13 Apr. 1848.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 11 Apr. 1848. H.T., 9, 15 Apr. 1848. At Deptford, it was said that members of the Peace Society persuaded the Battalions to refuse to parade.

action for debt against John Puntis, owner of the Union Road brewery where the Chartists met<sup>1</sup>. Loath to incur the risks that would inevitably accompany any parting from the Whigs, the radicals did not care to be associated with the followers of O'Connor and O'Brien. By 1850, the Red Republican told a correspondent, 'We cannot speak as to the present state of Chartism in the south and south-west....We believe there is little or no organization'<sup>2</sup>. While there were three agents for the Friend of the People on the Isle of Wight, and a number of contributions from Newport reached its 1851 appeal for funds, Portsmouth had but one agent and sent no money<sup>3</sup>. Nor do any of those who were active as Chartists seem to have re-surfaced in the fifties or sixties, leading different campaigns. Portsmouth Chartism had never been strong; it died rapidly, and left none of the memories that were to revive the socialist movement in the 1870s and 1880s<sup>4</sup>.

The Conservatives seem to have achieved little more than did the Chartists, beyond winning enough support among the propertied to establish a permanent presence on the council.

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<sup>1</sup>Northern Star, 11 Mar. 1848; Portsea and Isle of Wight Advocate, 11 Mar. 1848.

<sup>2</sup>24 Aug. 1850.

<sup>3</sup>Friend of the People, 25 Jan., 29 Apr. 1851.

<sup>4</sup>F. Mather, Chartism, 1972, p. 29; E.P. Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire', in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), op.cit., pp. 281-2; A.V. John, 'The Chartist Endurance: Industrial South Wales, 1840-68', Morgannwg, xv, pp. 34-44.



The Portsmouth Herald died out in 1835, and in 1839 Henry Gardner set up the Portsea Pioneer to fill the gap. It called itself 'Liberal-Conservative', and fed its readers with stories about the 'treason, rapine, plunder and bloodshed' of the Chartists, anti-semitic tales and jokes, and advocated a controlled paternalistic social order:

By these principles, and by these alone, is the rich man shielded from the violence and turbulence of the needy; and, through them, the poor man has a sufficient safeguard from the arrogance and tyranny of the wealthy 1.

The Pioneer lasted exactly four months, and Portsmouth's Tories went back to reading the Southampton-based Hampshire Advertiser. Yet, even allowing for the possibility that many readers of the Liberal Telegraph were navy men who read it for its excellent professional coverage, the Tory press sold badly (See Table Nine). The resort to a Southampton paper involved a loss of face and a sense of exclusion, as well as continued grievance at the misrepresentations of a 'pot-house Whig Radical' paper, as the United Services Gazette called the Telegraph<sup>2</sup>.

TABLE NINE: NEWSPAPER STAMP RETURNS, 1833 and 1843

	Weekly averages	
	Year ending 1 April 1833	July to September 1843
Telegraph	3,192	3,214
Herald	1,067	defunct
Advertiser	962	1,988

Sources: HantsTel., 23 Sept. 1833; Parl. Papers 1844, xxxii, p.

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Pioneer, 18, 25 July, 1 Aug. 18

<sup>2</sup>United Services Gazette, 6 July 1839.

The Telegraph was undoubtedly important as an informative and educational mouthpiece of part of the liberal group. Yet the possession of a newspaper, even an economically viable one, is not worth very much in the long run unless there are some effective ideas in and behind it, and Portsmouth's Whigs did have a consistent set of ideas about their own place in the world. Some of these have already emerged: a definition of local government as serving 'public' rather than 'private' needs, for instance. This may have owed something to utilitarianism: Bentham was quoted occasionally, but the references were banal ones. The radical-cum-liberal Portsea Advocate, for instance, quoted the well-known phrase about 'The greatest good of the greatest number' in its opening editorial in 1847. The point of the quote was to justify a definition of democracy that included non-sectarian education, the extension of the suffrage, and the ballot; these were not tied in to Bentham's thought in any way<sup>1</sup>. The Telegraph, in an editorial on the Dockyard enquiry of 1853, repeated Bentham to the effect that 'The English Constitution has its good points and it has its bad points'<sup>2</sup>.

Granted that intellectual influences can be held to have worked in mysterious ways<sup>3</sup>, these citations of the great

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<sup>1</sup>Portsea and Isle of Wight Advocate, 16 Oct. 1847.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 4 June 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', History and Theory, viii, 1969, pp. 3-53.

Bentham hardly suggest that here was a thrusting bourgeois ideology, forged in the fires of struggle and sharpened at the utilitarian stone. What then did hold the liberal ideology together? One answer is the tremendous sense of fitness for power that they saw as 'natural' and inevitable. In part, they found this sense of naturalness in their own record as reformers of injustices and abuses committed by artificial adherence to outmoded tradition. The sense of 'natural leadership' which this implied was captured by a local poet, addressing a Reform dinner in 1836:

The town of Portsmouth, 'tis well-known,  
A Borough somewhat close had grown,  
Would all not close so bright had shone!  
And yet its Heads, tho' self-elected,  
Had ne'er from justice derelicted,  
But held with most impartial sway  
Her scales unto this very day!  
As proof of which they're one and all  
Re-chose to fill, with fervent call,  
Those sev'ral parts within the Guild  
They had so long and ably held,  
In spite of our worst enemies,  
The Tories, who spar'd no device  
To snatch from us the golden prize.

The writer concluded with a tribute to the town's M.P.s:

Baring and Carter! Names rever'd,  
By all in truth and justice rear'd,  
And O long may they represent  
Our good old town in Parliament 1.

Liberals by no means rejected the past altogether, however. The 'intellectuals' among the Whigs had a strong sense of history, and in particular they were drawn to the seventeenth century. This was not something peculiar to Portsmouth, for

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 11 Jan. 1836.

despite Perry Anderson's belief that the 'ideological legacy of the Revolution was almost nil', the Bicentenary was celebrated in 1862, there was a minor cult around Cromwell, and John Bright regarded Milton as 'the greatest man who ever lived'<sup>1</sup>. In a paper read to the Philosophical Society in 1832, Daniel Howard attacked feudal society and praised the puritans for their zealous defence of civil and religious liberty. The title of his paper was supposedly 'The state of society and literature in the reign of Queen Elizabeth'; in it, he spent a good deal of time discussing examples of civil liberty in sixteenth century Portsmouth. References to Milton by political orators were at least as common as those to Bentham. Characteristically, the libertarian legacy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was expressed through literary modes. This did not make it any the less a practical matter: History, in Howard's view, was 'philosophy teaching by example'<sup>2</sup>.

Liberal ideology also embraced a conception of the social contract that may have owed as much to Locke as to Rousseau. Nathaniel Griffin (it might be useful to remember that he was a Whig, dissenter and lawyer) told a meeting held to condemn the Lords' rejection of the reform bill that

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<sup>1</sup>P. Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', New Left Review xxiii, 1964, p. 30; J. Vincent, Liberal Party, p. 29; C. Hill, Milton and the English Revolution, 1977, pp. 468-9.

<sup>2</sup>Annual Rep. Portsmo and Portsea Literary and Philosophical Society, 1832, p. 38; H.T., 16 Apr. 1832, 10 Dec. 1853.

the lessons which he had learnt from his boyhood were those of a respectful obedience to lawful authority, and affectionate veneration for the immortal principles of the British Constitution. One of these principles, however, he was prepared to maintain, was necessary, inalienable reservation on the part of the great body of the people - in case a direct and fatal collision, after the patience, petitioning and argument on their part, is forced by another branch of the legislature, and by which their just rights and liberties are denied - to right themselves 1.

William Lang's ideal M.P. was a 'man who would stand up against the King himself if he should not pursue right measures'. The legitimacy of the contract derived in part from natural justice, in part from its immemorial existence in an age when free-born Englishmen were in truth free and independent. What, James Hoskins asked a cheering audience, had the Whigs ever destroyed?

Not the venerable fabric of our Constitution, which had stood the test of ages, and which still displayed itself as the pride and glory of Englishmen, and the admiration of surrounding nations. Not one stone of that fair edifice had been removed, but they had merely pulled down the excrescences by which it had been defaced, and in which the bats and owls of Toryism had built their dirty nests 2.

The conceptions of history and the constitution cited are, of course, those held by intellectuals. Howard, Hoskins, Griffin: men trained in the law, used to elaborate rhetoric, and no doubt fond of hunting precedent. These men provided much of the intellectual justification that characterized

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 14 May 1832.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 17 Sept. 1832.

early victorian liberalism, and that helped to define the 'bats and owls of Toryism' in the popular mind as 'the stupid party'.

### 3. The Conservative Challenge, 1850-70

Nationally, the Tories had won strength throughout the thirties. Several distinct processes seem to have been at work here. First, the enthusiasm for reform that had led men to risk job and home to vote for the Whigs gave way once more to deference to property. Second, and more important, the propertied themselves swung politically to the right, for fear of the Chartists or alarm for the church. Third, popular support for the Whigs declined as the feebleness of successive ministries became apparent, and the only positive moves made - such as the establishment of the new poor law - often reduced the popularity of the Whigs<sup>1</sup>. The impact of these changes ought not to be exaggerated: the Liberals remained the 'natural' party of government at least until the sixties, while the Tories 'owed their brief spells of office to disputes in the liberal camp'<sup>2</sup>. Yet as early as 1868, during an election which was widely interpreted as a Liberal landslide, a Tory topped the poll in Portsmouth. Indeed, had a second Tory stood, he no doubt would have become the town's second M.P.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D. Close, op.cit., passim.

<sup>2</sup>J. Cornford, 'The Conservative Party, 1867-1905', in Open University, A 401, British Elites, 1870-1950.

<sup>3</sup>The 1868 election results were complicated. In the celtic colonies the Liberals won overwhelmingly, but in England it lost a handful of seats. The Liberals nonetheless made a few gains in the cities, while losing in the counties. R. Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill, 1972, p. 111.

The signs of Conservative growth had been present for some time. Liberals still dominated the local press, controlling two papers in the fifties (the Telegraph and Times), and could count on the radical Guardian for some support.

TABLE TEN: NEWSPAPER STAMPS ISSUED, YEAR ENDING APRIL 1854

	Annual Total	Weekly average
Telegraph	158,740	3,053
Advertiser	144,000	2,796
Portsmo Times	41,000	788
Portsmo Guardian	25,000	481

Source: Hants Tel., 13 May 1854

Nevertheless, the Telegraph had lost in circulation from the 1840s and, in a period of greatly expanding population, while the Advertiser had grown. The Telegraph managed to appear bi-weekly from 1865, but never managed to turn itself into one of the great provincial dailies that did so much to nourish middle and working class liberalism<sup>1</sup>. Worse than this, in 1853 a London solicitor, Alfred King, bought the Times from its founder, and changed its politics from liberal to conservative. From this point the Tories too had a regular local mouthpiece.

Such signs of change as the emergence of a Tory press, and the Tory domination of certain local honorific posts like

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<sup>1</sup>J. Vincent, Liberal Party, pp. 31, 93.

the churchwardenships, were not immediately interpreted. While Liberals had lost ground on the council to the Tories, they still held most places on the aldermanic bench. In 1852, for instance, thirteen of the fourteen aldermen were Liberals. No longer were the Tory councillors simply rich landowners, either: since 1846 their hold on St Mary's had been loosened by the arrival of the Liberal Andrew Nance, who took Baffin's Farm (142 acres in 1851). The Conservatives were now unambiguously urban men, sitting for the wards of St George's, St Paul's and All Saints.

Signs of Tory growth could even be detected in parliamentary politics. In 1852 Sir George Staunson retired, and a group of Tories and Liberals invited the ex-Lieutenant Governor, Lord Frederick Fitzclarence, to stand<sup>1</sup>. By late May Fitzclarence had withdrawn, and the would-be kingmaker T.E. Owen started to search for an alternative. One was found in Viscount Monck, an ex-Conservative who still held membership of the Carlton Club; he was endorsed by Owen and Sir Francis Baring. Monck was elected after a radical candidate, Sergeant Gazelee, withdrew from a contest. But in 1855 the radicals once more invited Gazelee to stand, and took the contest to a poll. Gazelee attracted widespread radical support, partly because of the political polarization

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<sup>1</sup>Fitzclarence was a bullying egotist, and despite his good works for Southsea he stood little chance of election. His liberal supporters included T.E. Owen, Henry Childs and John Cox.



that the Crimean War had produced, and partly because of the radicals' disgust at Monck; if Baring and Staunton were stuffed shirts, Monck was little more than a hole in the air. Among Gazelee's supporters was at least one old Napier campaigner, William Grant, a one-time Chartist councillor, Thomas Ross, and a new figure on the political scene, John Augustus Howell Howell, a small trader from Point.

The election ended in a victory for Monck<sup>1</sup>. The poll was low, but the results by ward (Table Eleven) show that radical voters were heavily concentrated in Landport and Portsea.

TABLE ELEVEN: VOTING PATTERNS BY DISTRICT, 1855 ELECTION

	% voting for Monck	% voting for Gazelee	N=
St Thomas	81	19	237
St George	69	31	336
St John	70	30	258
All Saints	69	31	361
St Paul	79	21	625
St Mary	96	4	146
Borough total	76	24	1,951

Source: Hants. Tel., 17 Mar. 1855.

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<sup>1</sup>Caused by his appointment as a Lord of the Treasury.

The largest vote for Monck came in Southsea, where the largest group of electors (because the richest property-owners and occupiers) lived; the Viscount also attracted heavy proportions of the vote in old Portsmouth and the rural districts. The radical vote was only partly based upon genuine radical politics: there was a simple desire for a change, for one thing. But there was a demand for household suffrage and the ballot, which Gaselee supported. There was also a good deal of community hostility to national state centralization, brought on by the manifest intention of the government to act on the report of the 1852 Police inquiry, and by attempts to foist the public health act on the town. Both of these implied heavy additions to a rate burden which the government refused to accept partial responsibility for. Thirdly, liberal sympathies among the yard workers had taken a hard knock when Lord John Russell revived earlier demands to disenfranchise government employees<sup>1</sup>. There were some 403 voters from the Yard, and others from the Ordnance or the barracks, and the Tory councillor Henry Ford did not hesitate to point out the political moral of Russell's bill<sup>2</sup>.

In the months after Monck's election, the rise in food prices led to further dissatisfaction with the government. In July 1856 John Augustus Howell Howell was asked by some Yard

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<sup>1</sup>The south Hants Whig Jervoise Clarke Jervoise had spoken in favour of taking votes from the civil employees of the army and navy in 1786. Lowe *op.cit.*, p. 126. The number of Dockyard voters is reported in Parl. Papers 1852-53, lx, pp. 587, 593.

<sup>2</sup>H.T. 5 Feb., 5 Mar., 21 May, 25 June 1853.

men, led by an engineer named Brame, to help form a meat-retailing cooperative<sup>1</sup>. In January there had been two strikes among the shipwrights in the Yard<sup>2</sup>. Even the Telegraph found Monck rather indigestible, suggesting that

it may be a subject for inquiry as to whether or not there cannot be found among the numerous gentry inhabiting the environs of Portsmouth a gentleman of Liberal opinions, and having, at the same time, as a local resident, an interest in the welfare of the locality<sup>3</sup>.

(This last comment may have been a veiled criticism of Baring, who had refused to allow his position as First Lord to be used to any local benefit). The campaign against the public health act also upset many of the wealthier inhabitants; and although Conservatives (such as Richard Murrell) were among the opponents of the Act, the leading figures in the campaign were liberal-radicals like Moses Solomon. Richard William Ford (brother of Henry), on the other hand, simply by-passed the council and community opinion, and obtained a private Act for Landport and Southsea .

In 1857 Liberals continued to support Baring and Monck; the Tories sniffed around the idea of a military man, before settling on a Scottish 'Liberal-Conservative' landowner by the name of Sir James Elphinstone. The radicals decided that, rather than field their own candidate, they were

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 26 July, 11 Oct. 1856.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 12, 26 Jan. 1856.

<sup>3</sup>Economist radicals and Tories promptly captures the Improvement Commission, however.

prepared to support the Tory rather than see the Whigs continue their domination over the borough. John A.H. Howell expressed this last view when he spoke of the campaign as 'an opportunity ... for the emancipation of the Borough from the yoke which has prevailed for nearly the last half-century'. Despite Elphinstone's refusal to support the ballot, Howell joined his election committee, telling the local Waterman's Association that the Scot was 'a man who most closely identified himself with the working classes of this important borough'<sup>1</sup>. Other radicals supported Elphinstone, including John Malcolm, a Landport newsagent, who directed attention to the Admiralty's refusal to pay a rate:

Only to think that because factious old Baring wanted place and power again, he has continued to burden the parish with one fourth of their rates, amounting to at least £8,000 or £10,000, from which it would have been relieved certainly in the next quarter <sup>2</sup>.

Elphinstone declared himself in support of the principle of rating government property, and urged greater generosity in the dockyard superannuation scheme. Radical support had to be paid for in terms of his political programme.

Elphinstone's election left the defeated Monck complaining that 'voters who opposed me... because I was not sufficiently

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 14, 21 Mar., 19 Sept. 1857. Howell was chairman of the Watermen's Assoc.

<sup>2</sup>Malcolm had supported the charter in the late 1840s, and was now an active member of the Landport and Southsea Improvement Commission. His broadsheet on Elphinstone is in the Saunders Coll., vol. 1, p. 63.

advanced in Liberalism ranked among the foremost supporters of a Conservative antagonist'<sup>1</sup>. Portsmouth had its first Tory M.P. since Cockburn. Elphinstone continued to sit for the borough until 1880 with a break of only four years, most of which came when he lost to Gazelee in 1865. Gazelee's victory was in part a freak result, stemming from the pressure for reform that after 1867 generally lacked direction. Although the Tories lost most of the radical activists faster than they had gained them, the strength of local Conservatism in parliamentary elections remained strong. It was enormously reinforced in 1868 when the electorate included a mass of working class voters who were thoroughly alienated by the Liberals' administration of the Yards. The enormous cut in the workforce in the 1868 estimates<sup>2</sup> came eight months before the bitterly-fought election, won by Elphinstone with a majority of over one and a half thousand; after the result, Gazelee, who took the wooden spoon, was beaten up and the Liberal committee rooms had to be barricaded<sup>3</sup>. The bitterness of the 1868 reductions was a prime cause of firm support for Tory candidates among working men.

Of course, there were other reasons for the growth of popular Toryism. Some are internal to Liberalism, which had evidently lost its hold on middle class voters. Classical

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 26 Sept. 1857.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 14, 18, 25 Mar.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 18 Nov. 1868.

Liberalism, with its appeal to a glorious reforming past and its friendship with political economy, seemed to lack relevance to the trader facing bankruptcy as his customers went to the poor house or emigrated to Canada. Older generations were dead: Edward Carter and Daniel Howard, two of the most attractive and best-respected figures among the Liberals, died in 1850. Liberal policies of peace and retrenchment were a little insensitive to the needs of a workforce whose prosperity depended upon war and expenditure. The Conservatives were far better able to win working class votes after 1868, setting up a Conservative-Liberal Working Men's Association and campaigning for naval expansion.

The Conservatives also benefited from the steady enlargement of the municipal electorate. The Small Tenements Rating Act was adopted very rapidly, largely because it enabled rates on small properties to be collected from the landlord rather than (as was often the case) excused because the tenant was poor<sup>1</sup>. In consequence the burgesses almost doubled in number, from 3,960 to 6,660; and, according to the Liberal town clerk, it had enfranchised 'a large number of the lowest class of voters, who are entirely subservient to their landlords, and vote at their dictation'<sup>2</sup>. Whether or not the

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<sup>1</sup>Portsea Vestry, CHU 3/2E/2, 17 Sept. 1850; Board of Guardians' Minutes, P.C.R.O. 193A/1/1/1/3, 10 Mar. 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Rep. Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Small Tenements Assessment Act, Parl. Papers 1859, sess. 2, vii, pp. 178-9.

new voters were 'dictated to', their numbers and social position meant that local elections were less predictable than previously had been the case, and this was itself a cause of greater party tension. Once more, Conservatives were faster to grasp the opportunity, and were first to organise effective registration. But the picture at local level was not so clear cut as at parliamentary, for here the radicals were able to find direct representation, and in broad terms these swelled the Liberal bench. Thus in 1874 there were 19 Conservative and 22 Liberals among the councillors (the loyalties of fifteen are untraced), with the Liberals holding just one more alderman than the Tories.

The growth of the electorate, and the impact of inflation upon rateable values, may have woven themselves into changing patterns of political involvement to alter the nature of the council. Occupational patterns are set out in Table Twelve, which shows that there was a definite alteration in the last twenty years of our period. Most noticeably, the high status groups had declined in importance, and there was not a single merchant or banker on the council. The professionals were mostly lawyers by 1874, rather than the broad spread of occupations of 1852. In the place of the high-status groups had come a chamber-full of retailers, about a fifth of whom were in the drink trade. There were complaints about the quality of municipal representatives. The Telegraph found symptoms of decay in 1850:

TABLE TWELVE: COUNCILLORS' OCCUPATIONS, 1852 AND 1874

(a) 1852	Liberal %	Conservative %	All Councillors %
Manufacturer, builder	21	45	26
Merchant, banker	18	0	13
Retailer	35	18	31
Professional	21	27	22
Independent means	3	0	2
Farmer	3	9	4

(b) 1874

Manufacturer, builder	32	26	23
Merchant, banker	0	0	0
Retail	45	47	48
Professional	9	16	11
Independent means	5	0	11
Farmer	9	11	7

Sources: Post Office Directories, 1852, 1874; note: the aggregate includes those councillors whose political affiliation has not been identified.

Our Town Council has for a length of time stained the character of the Borough, by having so greatly degenerated from the respectability it fairly claimed when the Municipal Act first came into operation; but disgraceful to the Borough as it has for some time become, we confess we were not prepared for that finishing stroke it received last Saturday, by the Burgesses of St Paul's electing to the Council a keeper of a fourpenny beershop in St Vincent Street 1.

This was Henry David Davey, a Tory, and the Telegraph's ire was probably due to the fact that a once safe Liberal seat was lost (the vacancy was due to the death of Daniel Howard). By 1874 there were six drink retailers on the council, four

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<sup>1</sup>2 Mar. 1850.



of them Tories<sup>1</sup>. Yet Portsmouth Toryism was not the sort of phenomenon described by John Vincent in Rochdale, 'a sort of social Stonehenge of pillars of pre-1832 society' together with Orangemen and the drink trade<sup>2</sup>. It represented a coalition of perhaps the majority of small traders with a number - we can only guess how many - of working men. While a few Liberals were still men of standing, this was sometimes questionable: Emanuel Emanuel, one of the last members of the 1832 generation, was obviously of dubious social status because he was Jewish. For the Southsea Observer of 1874, the councillors (who were apparently given to fighting in the council chamber when unable to reach a peaceful agreement) were a 'humble class of persons', irresponsibly squandering the rates. Four years later, indeed, Southsea attempted to win itself independence from the rest of the Borough<sup>3</sup>.

Another indicator of the falling status of the average councillor, while reminding us that rich and powerful men still did sit in the chamber, is the number who held any real estate. Comparing the 1874 councillors with the 1872-73 returns of landownership, it is possible to see how they compare with other wealthy men and women (see p. 160 above)

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<sup>1</sup>As was common: E.P. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, bk. 2, ch. ii.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent, Liberal Party, pp. 147-8.

<sup>3</sup>Southsea Observer and Visitors' Directory, 14 Aug. 1874. The Hants Telegraph expressed fears of 'the result of the indifference of a numerous class of residents at Southsea, who consign their voting-papers to the waste basket or pocket as soon as possible after delivery': 31 Dec. 1870.

TABLE THIRTEEN: LAND OWNED BY COUNCILLORS, 1874

Annual value of land owned:	Number of councillors:
£	
0	34
10-100	1
100-500	8
500-1,000	5
1,000+	4

Source: Parl. Papers, 1874, lxxii

There was a small minority of extremely wealthy landowners - six out of the only eighteen such individuals in the borough. These included farmers, and Isaac Ridoutt, a boot and shoe-maker; it would be interesting to know what form this real estate was held in - rented housing, farmland, or industrial premises. Yet despite Portsmouth's apparent mass of small- and middle-sized landholdings (p. 160), most councillors had no land at all, or at least if they did it was not worth enough to be reported. Probably, they rented their shops, and what small capital they did possess was sunk in their businesses.

One further phenomenon, which may be related to the councillors relatively humble social and economic status, was their changing age pattern. While I have not extended my study of this till 1874, the 1852 cohort of councillors were notably older than were the generation who sat during the late 1830s. This was most marked for the Liberals, whose average age

(of twenty six cases) was fiftyseven, with an upper limit of seventyfive; the youngest was Andrew Nance junr. at fortyone. The Tories were much younger, with an average of fortyseven. By 1874, although a few young men still came into the marginal seats, the aldermen and the safe seats were occupied by old men. Andrew Nance jr. was now Andrew Nance sr. and was sixtythree years old; Emanuel Emanuel was sixtysix. For the Tories, the leading activists were somewhat younger: Richard and Henry Ford, for instance, were fiftytwo and fiftyfive respectively. The council was as a whole aging, with the Tories providing only slightly fewer opportunities for the ambitious young man than the Liberals.

If the Liberals unsteadily held on to their power in these years, it was because they and the Tories believed the council to be a place where politics in a party sense could at times be subordinated to other needs. The chairman of the Portsmouth Liberals embarrassed Chamberlain in 1877 by his vociferous defence of 'non-political' local government at the founding conference of the National Federation of Liberal Associations<sup>1</sup>. The Liberals could also count on the support of radicals on most issues. There were at least four radical councillors in the early 'seventies, marked partly by their general political principles and partly by a single-minded drive for curbs on local rating. These were Manoah Jepps, an

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<sup>1</sup>Hanham, op.cit., p. 392.

upholsterer and committee man on the Working Men's Club, a teetotaler, who sat for St Thomas's Ward; Barnard Miller, who also sat with Jepps for St Thomas's, an undertaker, who used his van to carry scaffolding and grappling irons during the Southsea Riot; James Killpartrick, a grocer from Kingston, sat for St Paul's Ward, and was a poor law guardian. The leader of this group was undoubtedly John A.H. Howell; he had supported Miller's unsuccessful municipal election campaign in 1859, and usually acted with Killpartrick in the Union. Howell had been a beerseller in the late 'forties, becoming a ship's chandler on Point before retiring as a 'Gentleman' to Kingston. A Forester and keen supporter of working class organisation in various forms (he chaired meetings for the A.S.C.J., the Waterman's Association, and the Coop), Howell had left politics for a brief while in 1857, when it was discovered that he had an illegitimate child; he was soon back, as popular and boisterous as ever, and in 1867 was even elected a sub-superintendent by special constables who had been recruited to handle the Fenians. His politics were radical democratic; he came out as a supporter of Garibaldi, of compulsory pauper education, of household suffrage, of higher pay and shorter hours for working people. The Liberals were prepared to accept his support during elections, as they were prepared to coopt Thomas Ediss, the Landport carpenter who was secretary of the local reform league, onto the committee of the Portsmouth Liberal Association<sup>1</sup>. Also on the L.A. committee was Nathaniel Jones,

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<sup>1</sup>The Liberal Association was formed after the 1868 election: H.T., 25 Nov., 30 Dec. 1868.

another working man and reform league member, who in 1864 had been beaten up by Tories together with J.A.H. Howell.

Ediss and Jones were not typical of Portsmouth's working class. They might perhaps have represented something of a local 'labour aristocracy': well-paid Gladstonian artizans, who were prepared to put principles before pay, if such there were. More typically, the Portsmouth workman voted Tory for the very good reason that nationally the Conservatives were more likely to favour a belligerent foreign policy than were the Liberals. There was little time for Orangism: the local Orange Order was not a very flourishing phenomenon, consisting predominantly of the more vindictive local Tories (Binsteed, a solicitor, and Richard Ubsdell, a painter, were active Orangemen) and an unpleasant protestant minister, the Rev. B.D. Aldwell of St Luke's, an active campaigner against the Contagious Diseases Acts (see ch. eleven). Aldwell clashed with Ediss on a number of occasions; on the first, Ediss was beaten by Orangemen in the St Luke's school room after denouncing the order; the reform leaguers took their revenge on the Orangemen both at their own meetings, and by joining Irish soldiers in attacking the protestants' open air meetings on the Common<sup>1</sup>. The weakness of Orangism in its turn says something about the nature of Portsmouth's popular Conservatism: it had no especial grievance against the Catholics, and may well have been motivated by largely local concerns.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 9, 30 May 1868.

Popular Conservatism in Portsmouth blended instrumental and local motives. It is hard to argue that, in this particular town, the secular shift from Liberalism to Toryism can be reduced to one essential component in class relations; that it represents a shift in propertied strategies towards the working class. For one thing, the sternest critics of the established parties - ie the Chartists and radicals - were often led by small traders<sup>1</sup>, rather than by working men themselves. Equally Tory leaders were not necessarily the town's largest employers (apart from the Yard, even the brewers often tended towards liberalism until the '80s and '90s), but were small businessmen with a cream topping of army and navy officers. A more plausible explanation is that the rise of Toryism in Portsmouth would have to be related first and foremost to the growth of the electorate. In a town that never had an independent working class political movement of any substance, and where the prosperity of that class (and hence of other classes to whom it was a collective customer) was bound up with the politics of a major national political party, it was not surprising that working people and petty traders tended to identify themselves with that party, if only for pragmatic and instrumental reasons. At the same time, however, some at least of the propertied did move from Liberalism to Toryism, and this too requires explanation. In part this marked a choice of strategies towards the subordinate

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. D. Gadian's critique of Foster (op.cit.), 'Class Consciousness in Oldham and other North-Western Industrial Towns, 1830 - 1850', Hist. J. xxi, 1978, pp. 161 - 72.

strata: no churchman could have looked kindly at Liberals who flirted and sat on committees with radicals like Thomas Ediss, a known infidel, or William Horn, a building foreman who denounced the Bible every weekend on Southsea Common. Nationally, the Liberals seemed to be prepared to accept dreaded figures like Applegarth as allies, and this too must have alarmed the rentiers and perhaps the employers in a town like Portsmouth where trade unionism was experienced chiefly through sensational stories in the local press.

More important, the structure of the local bourgeoisie was changing. It is hard to believe that the Portsmouth Tories would have been so effective had it not been for the impressive figureheads that adorned their meetings; the growth of Southsea produced an electoral group that was naturally sympathetic to Toryism, and was almost certain to translate that into votes at parliamentary, if not local elections. Lastly, the new Toryism, with its populist overtones that may have carried added conviction from Disraeli's leadership in Westminster, marked a change in social relations within the propertied strata. In particular, large sections of property were now prepared to identify themselves with the state, to accept that in however unsatisfactory a way, it was supposed to represent them and its interests. Liberal strength in the 'thirties derived in part from a feeling that the old state lacked legitimacy. One consequence of reform, of the frights of 1848 and the Crimea and the consequent reform of the Civil Service, was a feeling that the state now possessed

legitimacy, and deserved to be defended from the likes of the Irish or the Sheffield grinders. So, if the growth of Toryism in Portsmouth does represent part - if an early version - of a changing perception of politics among the propertied, it was not just a perception of the way that subordinate strata needed to be handled. It involved relations within the bourgeoisie as well as between it and other classes. Also, it was popular Toryism, and the popular aspect was not simply a mask; or if it was a mask, then as Orwell once wrote, the face altered to fit it.

The popular component in Portsmouth Toryism reminds us that councillors were not simple representatives of the 'ruling class' and its interest. Some were: T.E. Owen and Emanuel Emanuel were classic examples of councillors who promoted little but the interests of their own class. To look at it from another point of view, the largest employer in the town - the Yard - took no direct part in local politics. Comparison with company towns is instructive: in places like Goole, Saltaire or Consett much of local life was controlled by the town's economic bosses in the most naked and direct way. Portsmouth was not, strictly speaking, a 'company town', for the Admiralty owned no 'social overhead capital' (housing, churches, shops, etc.) The Yard's impact upon local politics was twofold: it was in itself an issue of greater or lesser immediacy (rateability, redundancy), and its workforce were themselves a potential force (if rarely mobilized). The absence of direct Admiralty engagement in local politics is marked, and contrasts strongly with those towns where a private



employer dominated the local economy and went on to dominate local political life<sup>1</sup>. The contrast with the company town is indicative: Portsmouth's 'middle class' was not unified, let alone monolithic, but was and remained heterogeneous. Political heterogeneity - whether manifested in radicalism or Tory populism - was not simply a function of economic heterogeneity. The preconditions for 'middle class' radicalism and populism included the local absence of a mass working class movement of the kind found in many northern industrial towns; and the fact<sup>was</sup> that Portsmouth was not a new urban centre but rather a relatively settled city, whose fastest growth came during the wars<sup>2</sup>, and whose problems were not therefore so distressingly new as were those of Manchester or Bradford.

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<sup>1</sup>J.D. Porteous, The Company Town of Goole: An Essay in Urban Genesis Hull, 1969, esp. pp. 26-7, 46-7; S. Pollard, 'The Factory Village in the Industrial Revolution', English Historical Review, lxxix, 1964, pp. 513ff.; A. Wilson, 'Consett', Bulletin of the North East Group of the Society for the Study of Labour History, viii, 1974, pp. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup>Wilson, op.cit., ch.1, where it is argued that the years 1815-21 saw a net loss of population.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: AUTHORITY AND RESISTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

The relations between social groups at the point of production are often taken by sociologists and social historians as the major influence in class formation. Such a view is most often taken by those who work within a 'marxist tradition', although it is by no means exclusive to them, and it has not gone unchallenged by others working within that tradition<sup>1</sup>. John Foster has defined 'the dimension of authority at work' as 'the crucial dimension' in understanding the social change what he describes as 'liberalization'; he has also argued that the centrality of the workplace was a new phenomenon, replacing older forms of 'social control' as industrial developments demanded a completely new structuring of the labour force<sup>2</sup>. Gareth Stedman Jones has spoken of 'the primacy of work, and the social relations within which it is carried on, in the determination of class position and in the articulation of class attitudes'<sup>3</sup>. He also detects change approximately at mid-century, but rather than identifying it (as Foster does) with a deliberate bourgeois transfer from control over the community through

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<sup>1</sup>Capital, vol. iii, 1972, p. 791: 'The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of direct produce' reveals 'the innermost secret the hidden basis of the entire social structure'. Among the critics are B. Hindess and P. Hirst, Mode of Production and Social Formation, 1977; R. Johnson, G. McLennan, & B. Schwartz, Economy, Culture and Concept: Three approaches to marxist history, Birmingham, n.d. (1978); E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth Century Society....', cit.; also 'The Poverty of Theory, or an Orrerry of Errors', in The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays 1978, esp. pp. 349-54.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit., pp. 223-38; R.Q. Gray seems to agree - Labour Aristocracy...., cit., pp. 3-5.

<sup>3</sup>'Class Expression versus Social Control? A critique of recent trends in the social history of "leisure"', History Workshop Journal, iv, 1977, p. 170.

cultural institutions to control via workplace authority, Stedman Jones emphasizes the types of control exerted within the sphere of production. Following up a brief passage in Capital, vol. i, he argues that structural changes (broadly speaking, from domestic to modern machine production) required that the 'formal subordination' of labour to capital be replaced by the 'real subordination' of labour to capital<sup>1</sup>.

Historians are somewhat suspicious of dichotomous categories which purport to describe any social process, and this somewhat formal and abstract conceptualization can have only the most limited and banal application to any actual history of productive processes and labour. In this chapter, it is argued that views of this kind have a common failing, namely, that they do not pay any serious attention to the relationship that is inherent in the concept of class. Where there is control, in other words, there will be a response from the subordinate group. The response may take a number of forms, including accommodation to the authority of the owners of the means of production and including resistance to instructions from above. It is also true that instructions from above are formulated by the dominant group in the knowledge of the probable response of the subordinate.

It has been argued already, in Chapter Two, that despite changes in technique of production and in the nature of the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution' (review of Foster, op.cit.), New Left Review, xc, 1975, 63-5; H. Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital, 1974, Part I; K. Marx, Capital, vol. i, 1970, pp. 313-4, 383.

product, the labour process in naval shipbuilding was characterized by a large degree of 'craft control'. To repeat the conclusions of that chapter, it seems that in certain respects work in naval yards differed from that in private yards: there was less pressure from profit margins, there was a stress upon quality, the aristocratic background of many of the employing group could obstruct some of the pressures to 'economize', and the main method by which the employers tried to win control (piece work) was vulnerable to the men's administration of the pace. At the same time, some sectors of the workforce (most notably the smiths, sawyers and joiners) were subjected to technologically-induced pressures to a greater degree than was the rest of the workforce. One group (the ropemakers) were eliminated by the competition of female-operated machinery. However, technological changes also introduced new groups into the Yard, most notably the engineering workers that came with the steam engine factory in 1845-48, and this group seems to have been more tightly controlled by the employers than were the shipwrights. The experiences of the Yard workers were by no means homogeneous.

One peculiarity that alone gave Portsmouth's experience a certain uniqueness was the size of the Yard. Added to this, the Yard was long-established; the tasks of drilling an agrarian or artizanal workforce into accepting new rhythms and routines of collective work, faced by so many industrial employers of the nineteenth century, had already been faced

in the eighteenth century. The result in the years before 1830 was what Pollard describes as a 'discipline compounded of civil service and armed service practices'<sup>1</sup>, an exaggerated statement that nonetheless does point to some important characteristics of dockyard labour. The association of the Yards with the armed forces was tempered by the Admiralty's recognition that it could not use the same discipline with its civilian employees as with its naval and military ones. The worst that could happen (and it was bad enough) was dismissal. At the same time, there was a large discretionary power in the hands of the Yard Commissioner, who was himself a serving naval officer and often of aristocratic or gentry origins. He was, for example, a sworn Justice, able to try offenders on the spot. This could, of course, affect the tenor of industrial relations. While no nineteenth century commissioner imitated St. Lo of Chatham Yard, who in 1693 chased his workmen out of the gate at swordpoint, they could still exercise personal power over the labour force. Equally, they could exercise that power in a 'paternalistic' fashion, which seems to have been the preferred style of both Sir George Grey, and his predecessor, Sir Charles Saxton. For instance, when the Navy Board in 1804 tried to put an end to Yard shipwrights continuing to receive their pay while they were in fact serving as permanent parish officers, one reason given by Saxton for continuing the present practice was that it 'afforded...considerable

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<sup>1</sup>Modern Management, cit., p. 104.

Protection to the Body of the Yard People, in their little Properties'<sup>1</sup>. Grey had an equal propensity to defend 'the People' against what he saw as unnecessary tribulations; he was genuinely distressed by the trials of farm labourers that followed the Swing riots, attending the courts from morning till night to defend those men whose cases he regarded as deserving. Grey's interest in the personal fortunes of the workmen could extend to fairly minor issues: when anchor smiths petitioned in 1825 over the quality of the beer allowance for heavy work, Grey took himself to the Yard Tap and sampled the beverage; he wrote to the Navy Board in support of the men's petition<sup>2</sup>.

By placing a maximum limit of five years upon the service of Admiral Superintendents, the reform Admiralty hoped to reduce the tendency for the Yards' chief officers to develop 'attachments'. Yet the aristocratic and naval background of the Superintendents did permit the continuance of 'paternal' contacts and relations. The Portsea and Isle of Wight Advocate, a radical paper, expressed one view of such practices very clearly when Admiral Superintendent Sir Hyde Parker was posted from Portsmouth. Parker was praised for his fairness, his dislike of meanness or trumpery, and for twice over-ruling disciplinary measures taken by subordinate Yard officials; 'many of his actions are remembered with

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<sup>1</sup>Cit. Wilson, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup>Northbrook, op.cit., p. 79; N.M.M. POR/F/39, 25 Feb. 1825.

gratitude by the dockyard artizans'<sup>1</sup>. Superintendents continued to possess wide discretionary powers, if increasingly limited by the capacity of the Admiralty to intervene rapidly in the affairs of the outports: not only did the administration of this, like all other government departments, probably become more effective through the century, but the development of faster communications links between Portsmouth and London (most important were the semaphore, the electric telegraph, and the rail link) also made decisions swifter and better-informed.

The Admiralty was also concerned in the appointment of working managerial officers. The Principal Officers, with the exception of engineering officers, were all recruited from within the Dockyard system, so that all would have served a period as apprentices or clerks. From 1809 there was a 'superior' class of apprentices, schooled at Portsmouth under Dr James Inman, and meant to form a reservoir of talent from which senior officials could be chosen. Graham closed the school in 1832, partly as an economy measure and partly because Inman was making a nuisance of himself with his constant advocacy of steam power and metal materials in naval design. In 1842 schools were re-established, with instructions to place the most talented boys in a superior

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<sup>1</sup>30 Oct. 1847. Baring wrote in 1849 to all the superintendents asking them to pledge their words 'as officers and gentlemen' not to make political appointments: Parl. Papers 1852-53, xxv, p. iv.

class, where they could learn draughtsmanship, projection, and so on. This marked a shift from the earlier practice, since superior apprentices were now chosen only after they had been in the Yard for three years, and promotion to the superior grade was made dependent on an exam. The purpose of this system was elaborated in 1847 in an Admiralty circular:

A boy may be entered as an apprentice at 15, and after attending the Dockyard School for 4 years he may be selected at 19 for the Mathematical School at Portsmouth (i.e. the superior grade). At 22 he may return to the Service as a Leading Man. At 25, he may become an Inspector by superiority over other competitors, with the rise to First Class Inspector, Foreman, and Master Shipwright open upon fixed and intelligible conditions to every man of superior ability who cultivates his natural gifts, and does his duty to the Crown as an Officer.

Although the C.M.S. was closed in 1853 (once more by Graham), the 1858 Committee recommended the re-introduction of a superior class, and despite the hostility of most of the existing shipwright officers, the Admiralty did agree that the apprentices could enter for an extra year at school, in 1864 opening a School of Naval Architecture in Kensington<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. D.R. Jack, 'A History of the Royal Dockyard Schools with Particular Reference to the Portsmouth School', London M.A., 1969; P. Robertson, 'Technical Education in the British Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Industries, 1863-1914', Econ. Hist. Rev., xxvii, 1974, 222-35; P.R.O. ADM 89/1, 3 Feb. 1854; Mining Journal, 22 Oct., 19 Nov. 1853; Papers Relating to the School of Naval Architecture at Portsmouth, Parl. Papers 1833, xxiv, pp. 315-25; Rev. J. Woolley, 'On the Education of Naval Architects', Trans. Inst. of Naval Architects, iii, 1862, pp. 261-71; R. Harley, A Brief Biographical Sketch of Robert Rawson, n.d.



It is hard to explain the drive towards a hierarchy of the talents in the Dockyards in terms of a general 'spirit of reform' that seized all government departments in the nineteenth century. The reforms of the 1850s that started to loosen the grip of the Tite Barnacles upon the Circumlocution office had little effect upon the Navy in toto. Nor was it the result of the inherent drive towards exclusiveness and testable knowledge among a budding profession. While naval architects often saw themselves as professional men, with professional 'standards' upheld through the Institute of Naval Architects, a number of existing Shipwright Officers took refuge in precedent and patronage, firmly resisting any reimposition of the 'abstract' theorizing that they associated with schools and examinations<sup>1</sup>. The Dockyards, as a part of the Navy, had undergone fairly vigorous examination, public debate, and reform during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars<sup>2</sup>. The Navy had also been much shaken up during the first reform government's tenure of office, while Graham was First Lord, and had certainly experienced more changes than the Army<sup>3</sup>. While Whigs might have liked

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<sup>1</sup>On this see W.J. Reader, Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth Century England, 1966, pp. 85-100; C. Dickens, Little Dorritt, 1856-57; V. Cromwell, 'Interpretations of Nineteenth Century Administration: an analysis', Victorian Studies, ix, 1966.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. C. Lloyd, Mr. Barrow of the Admiralty: A Life of Sir John Barrow, 1970, pp. 72-82.

<sup>3</sup>One student has written an article about how little can be said on this subject: P.D. Jones, 'British Military Reform during the Administration of Lord Grey, 1830-1834', Albion, iv, 1972, 83-93.

to prune a much-distrusted source of patronage and ultra-Toryism, the army's loyalty was too essential to be prejudiced by potentially provocative reforms. After the 1830s, the Whigs were increasingly driven to the recognition that they might have to use the army at home; not until it disgraced itself in the Crimea did it come under serious scrutiny. The only exceptions were the engineering and gunnery departments, both of which required some technical competence<sup>1</sup>.

Those who had at various times been members of the various classes of superior apprentices included some of the most active senior officers of the Yards. James Bennett, timber master in the late 'forties and early 'fifties, attended the School of Naval Architecture between 1814 and 1820; by 1828 he was a foreman at Portsmouth. Augustus Creuze, who became a well-known writer on naval architecture, was at the S.N.A. between 1816 and 1822;<sup>by</sup> 1831 he was appointed draughtsman to the surveyor of the Navy. John Fincham (1785-1859), Master Shipwright at Portsmouth between 1844 and 1852, had not himself spent time at the School (coming out of his time in 1802 before the schools had been established), yet clearly was an 'intellectual'. He was made a quartermaster in 1808, and in 1812 was appointed to superintend the S.N.A.,

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<sup>1</sup>P. Razzell, 'Social Origins of Officers in the Indian and British Home Army, 1758-1962', British Journal of Sociology, xiv, 1963, p. 255. The R.E. had perhaps one-fifth the proportion of titled officers as the rest of the Victorian army.

becoming an Assistant Builder in 1832 with the abolition of the School, and becoming Master Shipwright at a minor Yard in 1836. Fincham was a congregationalist and an active reform campaigner; in 1824 he became President of the Literary and Philosophical Society; he wrote a number of articles, a treatise on 'Masting Ships of War and Yachts, and Mastmaking', and a book on the History of Naval Architectur as well as a lengthy paper for the Royal Statistical Society. While Master Shipwright, Fincham pressed for the introduction of the screw propellor into the steam navy, and was responsible for the design and construction of the first steam frigate, the Arrogant. His house at Mile End after his retirement was sumptuously furnished<sup>1</sup>. Fincham was accepted, both in the Yard and in the town, as an authority and perhaps as a gentleman.

One difficulty with applying theories of 'professionalization' to the dockyard officials is that their occupation was not simply concerned with the application of 'esoteric knowledge'. The Yard officers required their specialist knowledge partly to be able to interpret designs and orders from their superiors, and occasionally so that they could themselves contribute to the designs; but they also needed it so that they

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<sup>1</sup>Parl. Papers 1833, xxiv, p. 325; Return of the Promotions and Appointments of the Master Shipwrights and other officers...since 1830, Parl. Papers 1837-38, xxxviii, p. 261; H.T. 10 Dec. 1859, 30 June 1860; J. Fincham, 'Statistics of the Island of Portsea', Journal of the Statistical Society, xvi, 1853, pp. 137-68, 201-43.

knew what the workmen were up to. Their function was supervisory, as well as technical. The Admiralty, however, doubted rather whether men would respect a manager who had in the past worked at his tools alongside other workmen. Hence the practice arose of appointing men to another yard than that which they had served their apprenticeship and early service in. As Sir Baldwin Walker expressed it, summarising the report of the 1847 Committee of Revision, 'whenever a promotion took place, it was desirable that a man should not be promoted in the same Yard, if he was one of the principal officers, but that he should be removed from that Yard where he had performed duty in any junior grade, that he might have more control over the men'<sup>1</sup>.

The Admiralty Order resulting from the 1847 investigation laid down general rules to cover promotions in the Yards. The aim was twofold: first, to save expenses by proper supervision; second, to remove the widespread impression that promotions were arbitrary, since 'wherever such an impression prevails subordination must be weakened'<sup>2</sup>. Each leading man (i.e. a man in charge of a gang of shipwrights) would be chosen by the Admiralty after three candidates,

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<sup>1</sup>Rep. Sel. Committee on Dockyard Appointments, Parl. Papers 1852-53, xxv, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 353, which reprints in full the Admiralty Order of 27 Feb. 1847.

nominated by the Master Shipwright and his Assistants, had been examined in writing, arithmetic, measuring and draughtsmanship. Inspectors were to be appointed from among the leading men and the men in the mould loft, with two names being sent to the Admiralty after the Master Shipwright and Superintendent had selected and examined the candidates and checked their Foremen's reports. Each Inspector was responsible for four leading men and their gangs. Foremen of the Yard were selected from the Inspectors and the Measurers, with two names being sent to the Admiralty after an examination of three men in draughtsmanship, algebra and the first three books of Euclid. Assistant Master Shipwrights were chosen from the Foremen, and examined in the first six books of Euclid, mathematics, mechanics and hydrostatics. Examinations applied equally to the minor trades, although they were to be less tough than those for the shipwrights' officers.

The principle of examination before promotion was not rigorously applied, as the evidence taken by the Select Committee on Dockyard Promotions showed. Yet as favouritism and political patronage were steadily eliminated, or at least reduced in extent and visibility, so education came to assume a greater prominence in appointments. This, indeed, was recognised by the workmen as much as by anybody else. Cramming schools sprouted up in the town to meet the demand from dockyardmen who wanted to try and win promotion, as well as from parents who wanted their sons to win an

apprenticeship in the Yard. Dockyard workers also put pressure upon the local school board to provide a technical school<sup>1</sup>.

One hope for the principle of promotion after examination was that it would win legitimacy for appointments. This would seem to have been largely successful, displacing earlier views of authority as either arbitrary or legitimated by patronage systems (not everyone regarded favouritism as an outrage). In 1834, for example, a man who had been considered as best candidate for a vacant post of leading man was told that his promotion had been rejected; Sir Herbert Taylor had written to intervene on behalf of one John Peace, whose father had saved King William from drowning some years before<sup>2</sup>. The principle of examining candidates for promotion was not just a matter of establishing that they had the technical capacity for doing the job. It was important that, if they were to supervise the workmen, noone should believe that 'It's not what you know, it's who you know'.

Yet, paradoxiaally, the use of more rigid methods in appointing officers, along with the growing rigidity of Yard regulations and their enforcement, helped to increase

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<sup>1</sup>D.C. Savage, Elementary and Secondary Education in Hampshire between 1890 and 1914, Southampton M. Phil., 1970, pp. 179-80.

<sup>2</sup>N.M.M. POR/M/1B, 22 Oct. 1834.

tensions. These apparently reached a peak in the 1840s. It has already been seen that a local radical paper gave praise to a retiring Superintendent for his 'independence' in over-turning the disciplinary measures of the inferior officers. The inferior officers were a direct cause of resentment during a dispute in 1841:

the superior officers, these, whom we are led to respect from their position in society, from the authority they have a right to exercise, yes, these men appoint others to do their work, who seek every opportunity to tyrannize over the industrious working man, and glory in their position, knowing that the superior officers will always support them, whether right or wrong.

The author was Henry Johnson, secretary of the Shipwright's Committee and a Chartist. He went on to describe how a shipwright had come from Bristol to work in the Yard, only to be dismissed for 'insolence' to a petty officer.

MARK! - OPERATIVES .... There is a total absence of all right feeling towards the working man; it is true, there are some who cringe and pander to these petty tyrants, but in heart it is morally impossible ever to respect them 1.

In 1844 one hundred and twentynine labourers were dismissed, 'principally for insubordination and assaulting their overseers'<sup>2</sup>. In 1847, the Master Shipwright was accused of 'an act of tyranny' in calling the Inspectors together to ask them to be less lenient in their weekly reports on the men, and to stop the men from falling asleep or giving

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Free Register, 1 June 1841.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 28 Oct. 1844.

tobacco to the convicts<sup>1</sup>. There was, then, a certain amount of resentment against the supervisory grades, even if in the long run it may have been partly overcome by the introduction of a visible and rational system of promotion by examination.

Generally the supervisory grades were simply carrying out orders from the Admiralty. Although the Master Shipwright got the blame for urging greater harshness upon the Inspectors, he was acting upon Admiralty orders. Although the 'petty tyrants' got the blame for Henry Johnson's dismissal from the Yard, the order came directly from London. The Admiralty deliberately encouraged Yard workmen to look, not for paternal beneficence from their Lordships, but for considered responses from the Yard officials. Before the 1830s, it was customary for men with grievances either to march directly to the Master Shipwright and wait around his office until it was sorted out, or to petition the Lords of the Admiralty - often on their annual visit to the Yards. By the 1830s the Admiralty and Yard authorities were thinking of such actions as possibly intimidatory, and certainly as placing the onus directly upon their Lordships to intervene in the Yards' industrial relations. The first method, marching on the offices in a body, was replaced (at the insistence of the Yard officers, it seems) with the Committee system

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<sup>1</sup>Portsea and I.o.W. Advocate, 23 Oct. 1847.



as a sustained organization; hitherto, trades' committees had been elected annually to draw up the petitions<sup>1</sup>. As for petitions, the Admiralty seems to have relaxed regulations stipulating that these should be passed through the inferior officers and the superior officers' hands before reaching London. However, under the Earl of Minto (First Lord from 1835 to 1841) the older regulations were revived, and the personal appeal from men to master rejected:

Numerous letters are daily addressed to their Lordships by the Artificers and Workmen in the Dock Yards (said a letter to the Superintendent), which their Lordships consider highly irregular and improper, ...it is therefore their direction, that you do acquaint the numerous persons under your control, that my Lords will not entertain any application for the future, which is not previously approved, and transmitted by you for their consideration 2.

Although there is no evidence that workmen saw their Lordships as firm but benevolent and distant fatherly figures, the deliberate end to the personal appeal may have allowed the Admiralty to see themselves in this way. It also reminded workmen of the limits upon the relationship: political economy reached far enough into the aristocratic heads of the Admiralty for the relation to be confined, if not simply to the cash nexus, within established boundaries. No expectations beyond this could be entertained<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth, Portsea & Gosport Free Register, 1 July 1841.

<sup>2</sup>N.M.M. POR/R/3, 16 Mar. 1841; POR/R/5, 23 Sept. 1841.

<sup>3</sup>The authorities went to some trouble to ensure that parents of boys working as engineers' assistants were not automatically 'provided for' in later years: POR/R/5, 6 Sept. 1841.

So far we have concentrated chiefly on the types of person who exercised authority in the Yard, rather than the direction and consequences of that authority. There was, we know already, an assault, throughout those industries which had been established before large-scale mechanization and factorization overtook them, upon existing work customs<sup>1</sup>. It is also known that this assault had some effect upon ship-building, despite its slow and turbid adoption of 'modern industrial practices', where customary drinking practices and the gang organization came under challenge<sup>2</sup>. We might thus expect to find that the Dockyards saw some inroads into customary working practices. Two factors would modify the nature of the inroads: first, the economic situation of the Yards; second, the fact that they had been large units in the early eighteenth century and therefore already possessed a managed labour force. At the same time, political supervision over the Yard system, combined with beliefs in 'economy' and contractual equality, placed the Yards under pressure to increase productivity through the destruction of 'obsolete' customs that hampered higher rates of output.

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<sup>1</sup>Pollard, Modern Management, cit., ch. vi; E. Hobsbawm, 'Custom, Wages and Workload in Nineteenth Century Industry', in Briggs and Saville (eds.), op.cit., pp. 113-39; E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Workdiscipline...', cit.; D. Reid, 'The Decline of Saint Monday, 1766-1876', Past and Present, lxxi, 1976, pp. 76-101. For the United States see Braverman, cit.; H. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society, New York, 1977, pp. 3-54; and P. Faler, 'Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, shoe-makers and industrial morality, 1826-1860', Labor History, xv, 1974, pp. 367-94.

<sup>2</sup>D. Dougan, The Shipwrights: The History of the Ship-constructors' and Shipwrights' Association, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1977, pp. 11-15.

We would expect that foremost among the concerns of the Yard management would be the instilling of a sharper sense of the value of time<sup>1</sup>. It is fairly easy to provide evidence that the men did, indeed, internalize the new sense of time. Figure 1 shows that time lost at work by the men in each week in 1806 was not only on average quite high (weekly absenteeism rarely fell below three per cent), but also followed a fairly strong seasonal pattern. There are peaks at the quarterly pay days, of roughly five per cent, as men took time off to enjoy the pleasures of living from cash rather than credit. There is an enormous peak in late July and early August, when fifteen per cent of the men were absent. The reason for this was probably that the midsummer pay day, in early July, was followed by the two week Fair in High Street; once this was over, Portsdown Fair took up the remaining days until August. Probably it is an instance of the attractions of a Fair after a quarterly pay day that account for the following entry in a cabin-keeper's diary:

12 July Md Monday Pay Day; Sub Meassurers  
Paid first, then the Cabin Keepers. I was  
paid 20 Minutes after 7 ....

13 Tue Lost.

14 Wd Lost. 2

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<sup>1</sup>Pollard, Modern Management..., cit., pp. 213-6;  
E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work Discipline ...', cit.

<sup>2</sup>Field (ed.), op-cit. Figure One is drawn from a volume  
of weekly returns, 1805-9, in the Dockyard Archives.

Nor was absenteeism during the Fairs confined to the Yard: labourers employed on the Waterworks disappeared during Portsdown Fair, and in the 1840s building workers were said to lose time during the Free Mart<sup>1</sup>.

TABLE ONE: TIME LOST WITHOUT LEAVE AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL WORKING DAYS, 1800-1849<sup>2</sup>.

1800	1.36
1810	1.99
1820	0.72
1830	0.32
1840	0.35
1849	0.24

Source: J. Fincham, Journal of the Statistical Society, 1853, p. 219.

In the long term, attendance at work became far more regular, as is shown in Table 1. The Yard also saw a tightening up on other causes of lost time, such as customary holidays. Although few of the saints' days were observed by the trades, some were, such as St. Clements' day, which saw the blacksmiths in a state of high 'conviviality'<sup>3</sup>.

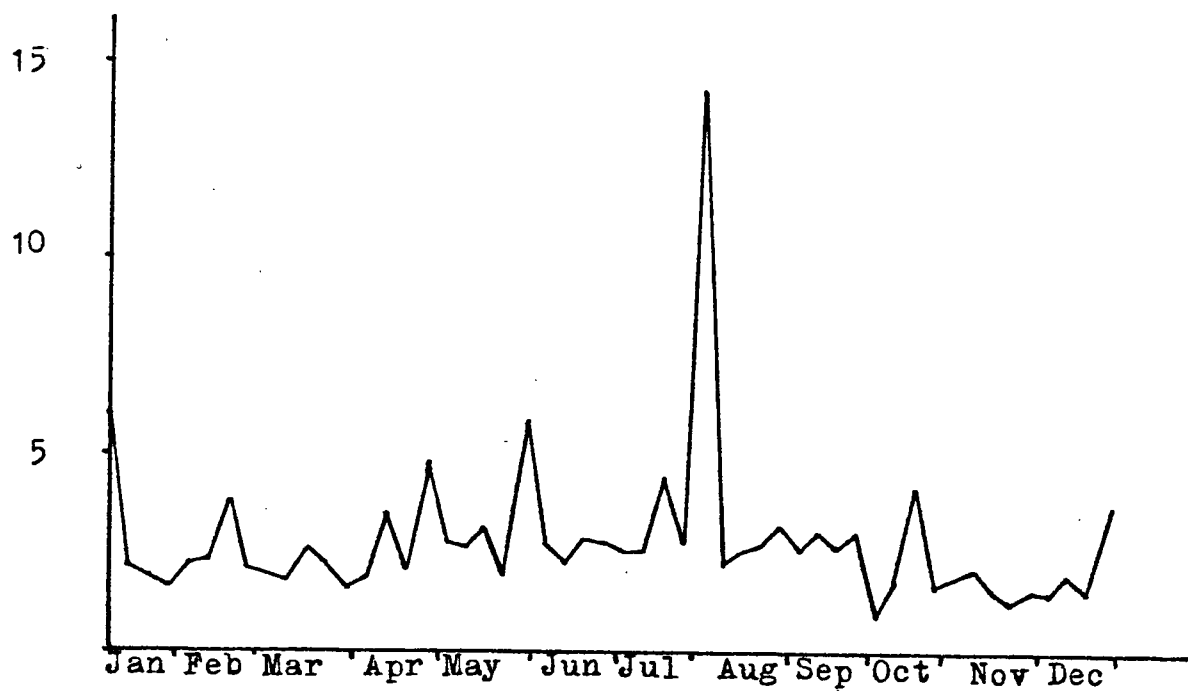
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<sup>1</sup>Hallett, M. Phil., cit., p. 66; H.T., 5 Oct. 1840.

<sup>2</sup>These figures are no doubt affected by high rates of overtime during the wars.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 26 Nov. 1837.

FIGURE ONE: ABSENTEEISM WITHOUT LEAVE IN PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL WORKING TIME, 1806.



Source: Times of Entry, Volume in Dockyard Museum.

Formal holidays were allowed on the sovereign's birthday, Coronation Day, Easter Day, Christmas Day, for the launching of a new ship and on election days.<sup>1a</sup> The Admiralty first examined the practice of giving the men the day off after a new ship was launched, and was most heartened to find out that no written authority could be traced for the practice. It was found impossible to abolish the practice altogether, since the launches were invariably open to the public, and it was the

usage to allow the People the afternoon of the day for a launch...in order that the Yard may be cleared and narrowly searched to prevent the possibility of mischievous persons secreting themselves for plunder or worse purposes 1.

This was in 1834; in 1869 the Yard men had the whole day off to celebrate the launch of the Devastation, its first very own ironclad<sup>2</sup>. The Admiralty had more success with election days, ordering in 1857 that only electors were in future to take time off; and these were to have two hours without pay on nomination day and a half-day with pay on polling day. Previously, all had been allowed a half-day on nomination day and the whole of polling day<sup>3</sup>. The reason for the change, however, may have been connected just as much with alarm at possible electoral intimidation (heightened by accusations of dockyard corruption at elections

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<sup>1a</sup> These were only paid holidays for established men: Southe  
<sup>1</sup> N.M.M. POR/M/1B, 7 Apr. 1834. Star, 17 May 18

<sup>2</sup> H.T., 24 Nov. 1869.

<sup>3</sup> H.T., 27 June 1857, 14 Nov. 1868 for its continuation.

as the drive on working time. Other holidays stayed intact, but were not extended, the yard men winning an accepted half-holiday on Saturdays rather later than many other workmen (although it was not uncommon for the Yard to be placed on a five day week as an economy measure). When the men wanted a day off to go to Portsdown Fair, the authorities agreed to add an extra hour to the working day for a week or so beforehand, to make up for the lost time; the same thing happened when Boxing Day started to become an holiday in the 1860s<sup>1</sup>.

The most important inroad upon existing times of attending work, then, came from reduction of absenteeism rather than abolition of existing rest days. The attack upon absenteeism was partly disciplinary; in 1822, for instance, a leading man of joiners was reduced to his tools for persistent absenteeism<sup>2</sup>. The mustering system, when the men were checked in and out of work by name, also came under scrutiny as the Admiralty attempted to increase the time spent working by administrative means. In 1839, for instance, the Admiralty rather clumsily announced that the working day would be lengthened by fifteen minutes with no extra pay so that mustering could take place with greater efficiency and

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 27 July 1853, 11 Dec. 1867.

<sup>2</sup>P.R.O., ADM 106/1891, 8 Apr. 1822.

without encroaching upon work time. All work stopped on the day the order was introduced, and the shipwrights marched in a body upon the Builder's office; the Builder withdrew the order, provided the men returned to work and elected a delegation to petition the Admiralty<sup>1</sup>. No more was heard of this plan, but the Admiralty was obviously keen to change the existing system, which allowed men to cover up for late arrivals unless worktime was wasted in cross-checking each name. After a trial period at Woolwich, a system whereby each man was to have a numbered ticket, to be deposited in a box as he went out of the Yard and picked up as he entered, was introduced in 1843<sup>2</sup>. There was also a general tightening up in attitudes to the late arrivals. When William Webber came in 'a little too late for my Call at 1 0 clock' after his dinner, he wrote,

Mr Nicholson, the Call Clark, Did Put me out.  
After some time talking he says Nobody is to  
be musterd. after looseing their Call, morning  
or Afternoon; he did not Cheeque me 3.

Webber was not 'cheequed' (that is, he lost no pay); but it was the practice for men who arrived late for a muster to lose the whole half day until 1866. In this year, it was decided to allow men who came in late for the morning muster to 'clock on' after breakfast<sup>4</sup>. In the steam factory and the smithy, as we have seen, time was even more precious;

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 10 June, Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Free Press, 6 June 1839.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 23 Oct. 1843; Lloyds Weekly London Newspaper, 12 Nov. 1843.

<sup>3</sup>Field (ed.), op.cit., entry for 22 Nov.

<sup>4</sup>H.T., 21 Nov. 1866.



and while the steam factory established severer penalties for lateness than the rest of the Yard from its inception, the smithy saw labour disputes when established customs were disrupted by the authorities.

As has been seen (p.47 above), the initiative in changing the smiths' lunch hours, to minimize the loss of heat by cooling the forges, came from the Yard officers. In June 1839 the period allowed to the smiths for dousing fires and washing themselves before lunch was reduced; but after a strike by the smiths, who marched on the Builder's office, the order was withdrawn<sup>1</sup>. Two years later the smiths' committee was suspended by the authorities after another dispute over the dinner hour; the smiths seem to have capitulated, making up their delegates' loss of pay from a whip round<sup>2</sup>. The smiths, like the engineering workers, worked a fixed ten-hour day, winter and summer. The rest of the Yard's manual workforce worked varied hours, depending upon the time of year and the amount of daylight<sup>3</sup>. Once more, pressures upon those who worked in capital-intensive departments, where the product was amenable to sub-division of labour into repetitive motions, were different from those upon departments which depended more upon the skill and judgement of individual

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 24 June, Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Free Press,  
20 June 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Semaphore, May 1841.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Fincham, op.cit., p. 215.

workmen<sup>1</sup>. In these, times of work did change throughout our period; but shipwrights were more likely to work the hours of 'nature' (i.e., often, custom) than were the smiths or engineers.

There was, in the long term, a tendency for new definitions of 'time' to make themselves felt among the Yard management. This itself had to be inculcated, and did not simply arrive with the dawning of a new day. Thus, in 1848 the Admiralty demanded to know what time the Yard officers dined and breakfasted - something that the Admiral Superintendent evidently regarded as an impertinence, since the next letter from the Admiralty read:

With reference to your letter of the 27th Instant, no. 789, I am to acquaint you that My Lords did not imagine that the Admiral Superintending Her Majesty's Dockyard at Portsmouth, was likely to dine at the same time as the artificers; but they did think it necessary to enquire whether the Principal Officers, & others immediately below them in rank, were in the habit of leaving the Yard for Dinner, immediately after the return of men from theirs, in which case it is obvious that the Yard might be left without proper

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<sup>1</sup>Injury rates are notoriously difficult to relate to type and pace of work, but it may be indicative that even in 1830 the average worker in the millwrights' shop took over 9 days off injured during the year; though most Yard workers took only one or two days off (e.g. the bricklayers 1.5, the riggers 1.9, the smiths 1.8; the shipwrights lost an average of 3.7 days each over the year). Nor can this have been simple skiving, for the millwrights did not lose an exceptional amount of time through sickness. Parl. Papers 1834, xix, p. 56.

superintendence, during a large portion of the afternoon. My Lords beg leave to observe that your letter contains no reply to this enquiry 1.

In the same year, Andrew Murray, the Chief Engineer, was criticized for failing to complete works within the times laid down by their Lordships, who reminded 'that officer... that his first duty is to obey, readily & cheerfully, the instructions transmitted to him by their Lordships'. The other principal officers were reminded to complete records of work done promptly, and to remain within the monthly schemes of work<sup>2</sup>. Time, as other ways of regarding work, came under scrutiny, both for management and for labour.

It took just as long for the Admiralty to impose stricter work discipline upon the Yard men. John Fincham wrote in 1850 that

it appears that the attendance of the men at their duties has been brought within these few years to a far higher degree of punctuality than it has ever risen to before; and this is clearly associated with the measures which have been in operation tending to the moral improvement of the establishment.

He also considered that 'complaints of conduct in any way constituting a breach of order or discipline are now of rare occurrence'<sup>3</sup>. The 'moral improvement' referred to does not seem to have denoted greater temperance, for although

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<sup>1</sup>N.M.M. POR/P/42, 30 Oct. 1848. This letter also makes the first reference that I can remember by the authorities to the men as 'the working classes', rather than as 'the People of the Yard'.

<sup>2</sup>POR/P/42, 8 Nov. 1848; POR/P/43, 12 Dec. 1848; POR/P/44, 11 Jan. 1849.

<sup>3</sup>Fincham, op.cit., p. 220.

TABLE TWO: HOURS WORKED IN THE DOCKYARD, 1839, 1848, 1867.

(a) 1839

1 Mar. to 20 Nov.	9 hrs 30ms.
3 Oct. to 1 Dec.	8 hrs 40ms.
2 Dec. to 3 Jan.	7 hrs 30ms.
4 Jan. to 28 Feb.	8 hrs 20ms.

(b) 1848

5 to 13 Oct.	9 hrs 15ms.
13 Oct. to 4 Nov.	8 hrs 30ms.
4 Nov. to 11 Nov.	7 hrs 45ms.
11 Nov. to 19 Nov.	7 hrs 30ms.
19 Nov. to 15 Jan.	7 hrs 00ms.
15 Jan. to 1 Feb.	7 hrs 15ms.
1 Feb. to 14 Feb.	8 hrs 00ms.
15 Feb. to 1 Mar.	8 hrs 30ms.
1 Mar. to 4 Oct.	9 hrs 30ms.
Factory, all year:	8 hrs 00 ms.

(c) 1867

1 Jan. to 31 Jan.	8 hrs 00ms.
1 Feb. to 28 Feb.	9 hrs 00 ms.
1 Mar. to 30 Sept.	10 hrs 15ms.
1 Oct. to 31 Oct.	9 hrs 00ms.
1 Nov. to 15 Nov.	8 hrs 15ms.
16 Nov. to 31 Dec.	7 hrs 15ms.

Sources: P.R.O., ADM 1/3440, 13 Sept. 1839; P.R.O., ADM 7/594, general returns; Hants. Tel., 27 Sept. 1867.

the tap was closed in 1832 blacksmiths on heavy work continued to be supplied with beer, and wives brought beer in with their menfolk's dinners. In the 1850s the custom was for a publican to bring a six-gallon barrel into the smithery every morning at a quarter to twelve<sup>1</sup>. When a canteen was opened in the Yard in 1862, it sold beer much as the Tap had done<sup>2</sup>. Although one labourer was discharged in 1822 'on account of idleness and being too fond of the Tap', in 1839 a foreman of shipwrights who had 'not been at all times perfectly sober' was simply placed in a new work situation, where he could be watched from the offices<sup>3</sup>. It is more likely that Fincham was thinking of the attempts that had been made in 1847 and 1849 to systematize the management of the Yards and to remove promotions from the grasp of politicians, as well as the longer-term effort to introduce compulsory schooling for apprentice boys<sup>4</sup>.

So far, this chapter has concentrated upon the ways that changes in the use of worktime took place, and sometimes led to resistance from the workforce. However, the majority of reported disputes within the Yard took place over other issues than those which may be called 'job control'. Most petitions were concerned with wages, as were the bulk of

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<sup>1</sup>Rep. Committee on Dockyard Economy, cit., p. 404.

<sup>2</sup>POR/K/3, 15 Sept. 1832; POR/P/3, 12 Nov. 1840; H.T., 13 Sept. 1862.

<sup>3</sup>P.R.O. ADM 106/1891, 12 July 1822; ADM 1/3440, 9 Feb. 1839.

<sup>4</sup>There were a number of complaints that the boys had little respect for the teacher: N.M.M. POR/P/39, 1 Feb. 1848; Rep. Committee of Council on Education, 1860, p. 456.

disputes leading to strike action. On the whole, strike action was rare among the established men in the Yard - the established being those who were entitled to a pension when dismissed (unless for malpractices), and therefore had much to lose from any action that might lead to reprisals by the authorities. Hired men - who were theoretically only temporary employees, and even if retained for years had to be symbolically dismissed at the end of each financial year and re-hired at the start of the next - were more likely to strike. Unfortunately, petitions were preserved far less frequently in the middle and later parts of the nineteenth century than they were for the early decades studied by David Wilson, who found that at least 140 collective petitions came from Portsmouth in the years 1793-1815<sup>1</sup>. However, an impressionistic glance at the petitions that I have been able to find reports of in Admiralty records and newspapers show that the shipwrights followed by the ropemakers were still the most prolific authors of petitions (Table Three).

The most common grievance among the men was pay, which accounted for thirty of the thirty seven petitions identified. Others dealt with pensions, or with issues that caused only the one petition (among those identified, it must be repeated): apprentices in 1835 petitioned to be taught naval

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit., p. 377.

TABLE THREE: SOME LABOUR DISPUTES IN PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD,  
1817-1869

	Petitions	Strikes	Other Action
1817	Ropemakers - to leave early		
1818			
1819			
1820			
1821			
1822	Clerks - pay; messengers - pay; Quartermen - status; millwrights - pay		
1823			
1824			
1825	Ropemakers - pay		Labourers to down work in mills - pay
1826			
1827			
1828			
1829			
1830			
1831			
1832			
1833	All grades - reductions	Hired plumbers - pay	'Artifiers' turn down
1834	Enginekeepers - pay; millwrights - pay; draughtsmen - pay; 'mechanics' - pay		Sunday overt - pay
1835	Apprentices - schooling; mechanics - pay		
1836	'Mechanics' - pay		
1837	Shipwrights - pay		
1838			
1839	Shipwrights - various	Shipwrights - various; Smiths - hours	
1840	Shipwrights - apprentice-ship; pay; smiths - pay; hired ropemakers - holiday pay		
1841	Shipwrights - various; ropemakers - pensions; smiths - pay; apprentices - pay		Riot - poli searches

	Petitions	Strikes	Other Action
1842			
1843			
1844			
1845			
1846			
1847			
1848	Riggers - pay	Hired Masons - task and job system	
1849			
1850			
1851			
1852			
1853	Sawyers - pay; ship- wrights - pay;		
1854	Yard craft crews - pay		
1855			
1856	Shipwrights - pay		
1857	Sawyers - pay; sailmakers - pay; ropemakers - pay		
1858	Factorymen; pensions		
1859	Riggers - pay; all - pensions	Hired sawyers, hired shipwrights - pay	
1860	Officers of smiths and millwrights - pay	Hired shipwrights - task and job system	
1861	Superannuated men - pensions		
1862			
1863			
1864			
1865	Mechanics - pay; shipwrights and caulkers - pay		
1866	Labourers - pay		
1867			
1868			
1869	Factory men - pay		Factory men - leaving the country



architecture, ropemakers asked to be allowed to leave work early so as to carry out their own work at home. Pay, however, was clearly the predominant issue. This emerges clearly from the list of petitions, although it has to be borne in mind that these are but a tiny minority of the total, and a haphazardly chosen minority at that. Yet, although grievances seem to have been substantially the same as those of any other group of industrial workers, and although the Yard fulfilled at least one of the structural conditions which are thought to conduce to trade unionism - namely a large workforce depending upon wage labour - a sense of common grievances and an occasionally combative approach to collective interests did not lead to sustained formal trade unionism among the Yard men in this period.

This is perhaps surprising, since there is evidence both of a tradition of local militancy, and of existing trade organizations in other parts of the country. Not only were there a number of outright strikes in our period, in 1834, 1839, 1848 and 1849, but there was also a previous history of wartime strike activity: in 1775, 1799, 1801, 1806. Moreover the workmen had shown themselves capable and willing to maintain a formal, permanent class-based organization - the co-operative mill and bakery that they had set up in 1796-97<sup>1</sup>. The bakery was defended successfully against threats and persisted through economic depression into the 1850s. There is, then, no reason to believe that the dockyardmen, and the shipwrights in particular, were unable or unwilling to take concerted action to defend what they saw as their

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<sup>1</sup>See below, ch. viii for details.

interests when it was necessary. Further, there were plenty of examples in other ports of trade organization. John Gast, a shipwright who had worked at Portsmouth, set up the Hearts of Oak on the Thames in 1802, competing with the St Helena Friendly Society established ten or so years earlier (Gast was later involved with the Philanthropic Hercules)<sup>1</sup>. South Shields shipwrights had been organized into friendly societies in the 1790s, and by the mid-1820s there were shipwrights' unions in Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Bristol, and on the north-east coast<sup>2</sup>. The bulk of shipbuilding workers' organizations were based upon a single port; despite an unsuccessful attempt at amalgamation in 1856, the Amalgamated Society of Shipwrights was not formed until 1870. Even at this late stage, its largest sections were in Liverpool, London and the north-east - precisely those areas which, with Glasgow, had sent most delegates to the 1856 amalgamation conference<sup>3</sup>. All this had little effect upon the Portsmouth shipwrights; some tried to join the A.S.S. in 1874, but refused to accept the Amalgamation's rules, and only when A.S.E. members started to clash with shipwrights while fitting out steel ships did the A.S.S. recruit

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Wilson, op.cit., p. 356; the Philanthropic Hercules was, say the Webbs, the first attempt to form a general society covering all trades: The History of Trade Unionism, 1894, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Foster, op.cit., p. 105; P. Rathbone, 'An Account of Shipwrights' Trades' Societies in Liverpool, the Tyne, and other Ports', Report of the Committee on Trades Societies, Nat. Ass. for the Promotion of Social Science, 1860, pp. 479-520.

<sup>3</sup>Rathbone, op.cit., p. 501; Dougan, op.cit., pp.

dockyardmen<sup>1</sup>.

There were other unions in the Yard before the 1880s. Millwrights and ropemakers had belonged to London-based societies at the turn of the century, although both were somewhat isolated from the rest of the workforce. Engineering workers in the steam factory seem to have been Society members, for the A.S.E. reported 44 members in its Portsmouth branch, and nowhere else employed more than one or two men; even then, A.S.E. membership fell until 1854, with 22 members being excluded for non-payment of dues in the three intervening years (see Figure One). Boilermakers too seem to have been organized, for they were among the subscribers to the striking Preston cotton workers in 1853<sup>2</sup>. As well as these precedents in their own Yard, Portsmouth shipbuilding workers could look to other Yards such as Chatham, where there was a branch of the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Webb Mss. A, xxxii, ff. 53, 69-75, 78, 114, 149, 155. Sailmakers lacked any national union until the 1880s, when the Federation of Sailmakers was formed; it lacked a Portsmouth branch until the early twentieth century, although there was a branch of the Government Workers' Federation which organized sailmakers. M. Hirsch, 'The Federation of Sailmakers of Great Britain and Ireland, 1889-1922: A Craft Union in crisis', Warwick M.A., 1976; F.O.S. Conference Report, Aug. 1897, M.R.C. Mss 87/1/4.

<sup>2</sup>Wilson, op.cit., pp. 319, 367; A.S.E. Monthly Reports, Dec. 1851, 1852, 1853 and 1854, L.S.E. Coll. ED 69; J. Lowe, 'An Account of the Strike in the Cotton Trade at Preston in 1853', Nat. Assoc. for the Promotion of Social Science (1860), op.cit., p. 260; the engineers also subscribed to this strike fund.

<sup>3</sup>In 1862 these struck for 13-14 weeks against the use of wooden shipwrights: Webb Mss. Coll. A, xxxii, 28-34, 147, 180; xxxiii, 29.

In the end unionization was connected to demarcation disputes, and here Portsmouth seems to have followed the common pattern of the industry<sup>1</sup>. It is, of course, possible that the Webbs' view of the Yards (which I follow) was in some way distorted, and that they misled the Portsmouth trade union men whose views are recorded in the manuscripts at the L.S.E. This might be the view of V.L. Allen, who says that the Webbs 'did not succeed in preventing their values from intruding into the history they wrote'<sup>2</sup>. This is probably true of the Webbs, as it is of every other historian that I have read, but does not necessarily weaken the force of their evidence upon the demarcation question and its importance. To take just one piece of supporting material, the Admiralty committee on Dockyard wages, sitting in the early 1890s, concluded that 'the extremely technical nature of the question of demarcation of work between dockyard trades and the necessity of having a sufficient amount of elasticity and interchangeability in trades nearly allied to each other' made matters too complicated to be solved in advance by administrative fiat; instead the committee recommended that any disputes should be solved by a conference of local managements<sup>3</sup>. The problem remains acute in the Dockyard to

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<sup>1</sup>P. Robertson, 'Demarcation Disputes in British Ship-building before 1914', Int. Rev. of Social History, xx, 1975, pp. 220-35.

<sup>2</sup>'A Methodological Criticism of the Webbs as Trade Union Historians', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, iv, 1962, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>2nd Rep. of the Committee on Dockyard Wages, 1892-93, p. 12, P.R.O. ADM/116/374.

the present day, where the basis for negotiation is often an existing labour process whose origins lie in the 1860s and '70s<sup>1</sup>.

If demarcation was often an important precipitant of militancy in late nineteenth century shipbuilding, helping to strengthen unionism among the workforce, it was unusual for it to be the cause of initial unionization. Some sort of explanation for Portsmouth's lateness in arriving on this well-trodden field has to be attempted. Several possible explanations will be examined. First, the notion that the Yards as a whole had a harsh discipline which excluded or severely reduced all possibility of trade organization<sup>2</sup>. Second, the possibility that paternalistic management practices 'bought off' the workforce, or perhaps a central grouping within it. Thirdly, the possibility that differences of interest between the individual members of the workforce, or between groups of workers, were so great as to exclude the possibility of common sustained organization. Lastly, I want to see whether there was any evidence that the administration of the Yard and its labour processes rested on 'a measure of representation of the working class, especially but not exclusively of its

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<sup>1</sup>The Rep. of the General Manager, H.M. Dockyard, Portsmouth, for 1967-68 pointed out that 'The elimination of demarcations is an important aspect of productivity bargaining': Horne Mss., P.C.R.O. 404A. Cf. Also G. Roberts, Demarcation Rules in Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing, Cambridge, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Pollard, Modern Management..., p. 104; Crossick, Ph.D., cit., pp. 113-4; M. Waters, op.cit., pp. 51-2.

upper strata'<sup>1</sup>; that is to say, whether the workers were happy in their work.

Yard discipline could be harsh, and it could be all-embracing, so that even personal behaviour such as smoking during the dinner hour or marrying before completing your indentures, might bring you before the authorities<sup>2</sup>. Like any private employer, the authorities could sack a man with no likelihood of any come-back unless the men decided to take action; in that case, they too laid themselves open to dismissal. Yet there is no evidence that the Admiralty used the threat of the sack in any systematic way against potential unionists in this period<sup>3</sup>. Of course, the possibility of dismissal was a dreadful thing for a working man; but it existed in other occupations and places which did have strong trade unions, and often among men and women whose skills were less easily marketable than those of the government shipwrights.

In the earlier years, deference might be rewarded and militancy punished. At a time of depression and industrial unrest elsewhere in the industry, it was possible for the Admiralty to behave as they did in 1825:

In consequence of the dissatisfaction expressed by the Artificers of the other Dock Yards, in having to perform, in turn, inferior work, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty have

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<sup>1</sup>R.Q. Gray, 'Politics, Ideology and Class Struggle under Early Industrial Capitalism: a critique of John Foster', Marxism Today, xxi, 1977, p. 371.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 9 Dec. 1848, 3 Feb. 1866.

<sup>3</sup>Wilson, op.cit., pp. 332, 339, 350-2, 369-72 for earlier instances of the dismissal of spokesmen or strikers.

ordered about 376 to be forthwith discharged from Plymouth, Sheerness, Chatham and Deptford Dockyards; but, as no complaining petition has been forwarded from this Yard, their Lordships have directed that none shall be removed <sup>1</sup>.

This, however, was a way of handling industrial relations that lost in effectiveness during times of high employment. Cruder attacks of this kind did not survive the advent of the reform government.

Only one case of dismissal for organized labour activity seems to have occurred in this period. This involved Henry Johnson, secretary of the shipwright's committee, who was sacked in 1841 after placing an advertisement in a local radical newspaper which set out the shipwrights' grievances in detail. Johnson was an active Chartist, campaigning against the corn laws and taking the chair when Dr. McDouall addressed a meeting. He had irritated the administration in February 1841, when he represented a Yard shipwright who had died after an accident at work. The shipwrights' committee, who had appointed Johnson as the deceased's representative at the inquest, complained that the injured man had been ordered back to work after an incompetent diagnosis by the Yard surgeon; the jury was impressed enough to add a rider to their verdict of 'death by accident', to the effect that the surgeon ought to be 'more careful in his examination of future cases that may fall under his care'<sup>2</sup>. Four months

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<sup>1</sup>Hants. Tel., 3 Jan. 1825.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 15 Feb. 1841.

later the advertisement appeared, over Johnson's signature, as a warning to men who might be attracted to work in the Yard<sup>1</sup>. He was dismissed, on the orders of the Admiralty<sup>2</sup>.

The Johnson case suggests that the Yard's discipline probably did hinder the establishment of sustained organization. Of itself, however, it by no means proves that discipline was a very important obstacle. It was an isolated instance, which can be countered with the experiences of George Cotsell, a blacksmith, who was also at the McDouall meeting, agitated against the new police, denounced Sir James Graham in public, helped organize a pay campaign in 1836 and was an ally of David Brent Price. Cotsell was chief of the smithery by the 1860s<sup>3</sup>. The difference lay perhaps in the methods used: Cotsell was appealing to a town meeting, while Johnson was writing in a distinctly radical paper. This does show that there was nothing absolute in the Admiralty's attitude. Furthermore, unions sprang up in places where employers had more control over the workforce, both at work and at home,

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Free Register, 1 June 1841.

<sup>2</sup>N.M.M. POR/P/5, 15 June 1841. The shipwrights clubbed together to buy Johnson a small shop in Spring Street, so that he could continue to work in the area, as he did for at least one year. H.T., 21 June 1841; Chartists poster, March 1842, P.C.R.O. 11A/20/104. Another case occurred in Devonport, where a socialist ropemaker named John Ellis was sacked for writing to a newspaper: P.R.O. ADM 89/1, 1 Apr. 1854; Red Republican, 3 Aug. 1850.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 12 Dec. 1836, 21, 28 Dec. 1840, 17 May 1841, 12 Dec. 1863.



than they did in Portsmouth dockyard. The classic instance of this must be mining, where discipline was far harsher than anything that the shipwrights would have tolerated, and where employer control extended (via the truck shop) to the food that your family ate. It does not seem, then, that the system of discipline followed in the Yard can by itself explain very much about the way that Yard workers organised.

The second possibility, by no means incompatible with the existence of strict discipline, is that paternalist management practices led to quiescence. I think there is something in this. Above all else was the pension given to 'established' men upon their retirement. Before 1815 the superannuation pension was only available to men with more than thirtyfive years' service, although a lesser pension could be paid to men superannuated after a shorter time than that. From 1815 men could be superannuated on full pension after twenty years' service (not including apprenticeship). The pension was briefly abolished under Graham's regime, but after an absence of seven years the Admiralty decided to reintroduce it in 1839. Unlike the previous system, it was now available to all grades of established men but the labourers. Finally, from 1859, the dockyards were embraced under the Civil Service superannuation scheme, somewhat to Gladstone's disgust. The rates paid were certainly adequate to sustain life, and in certain cases were quite substantial<sup>1</sup>. Retired shipwrights,

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 2 Jan. 1815, 24 June 1816, 31 Dec. 1832, 12 Dec. 1836, 10 June 1839, 23 Apr., 3 Sept. 1859; J. Vincent, Liberal Party..., P. 249.

who before 1859 received £24 per annum, received £46.19s under the new scheme (with £57.8s. for leading men); first class labourers, who had previously been ineligible, now received £31.6s. per annum upon their retirement. The pension placed a premium upon good behaviour in two ways. First, it encouraged men to think of themselves as 'long service men', rather than as simply in the Yard for so long as the going was good. Perhaps in turn this bred an attitude to the job that went beyond instrumental acceptance of the role of labour, and went on to include some sort of notion of 'public service'. Moreover, the Yard gave paid holidays, paid sick leave, and free medical attention. At any rate, Yardmen were notoriously committed to staying in their jobs, and on those occasions when they were dismissed, seem to have been deeply shocked. In these circumstances, as Crossick notes, they might throw over England entirely and go to America - sometimes in a bitter mood towards their mother country<sup>1</sup>.

The pension system was also seen by the authorities as a means of direct control. Thus in 1822 a labourer who had worked for fifteen years at Woolwich and nine at Portsmouth was refused a pension on account of his record of absenteeism; in 1834 a shipwright, discharged for keeping a pub, was

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<sup>1</sup>Crossick, Ph.D., p.112. Mutual insurance was an important part of any union's activities; not only had the Yard authorities already removed much of the need, but the town also contained a dense undergrowth of friendly Societies, discussed in the following chapter.

refused his pension despite the fact that he had served for twentysix years; in 1848 two men, both sawyers, had their pensions reduced 'on account of Indifferent Character'<sup>1</sup>.

A circular of 1841 reminded Superintendents that before a man was to be considered for superannuation, 'General character and conduct' had to be taken into consideration; a 'Defaulters' Book' was to be kept, and any entries would be considered by their Lordships before granting the pension.

The circular went on:

my Lords will, as heretofore, grant their lower rate of Pension after 20 years service, provided the men recommended for the same shall have been found unfit for further service, and shall have maintained a good character; and they will only grant the higher rate of Pension to persons who, either from length of service, or from the injuries they may have sustained in a faithful and diligent discharge of their duties, shall merit particular indulgence; and my Lords further reserve to themselves the power, with the view of discriminating between the services and claims of individuals, and of rewarding them according to their respective merits, not only of granting the higher or lower rate of Pension, as at present, but any intermediate rate they may, on a view of the individual case, deem proper 2.

The language, with its reference to the discharge of duties and services and claims and indulgences, was certainly that of aristocratic paternalism. Perhaps the practice was as well<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>P.R.O. ADM 106/1892, 25 Sept. 1822; ADM 1/3435, 13 July 1834; N.M.M. POR/R/15. 17 Apr. 1848.

<sup>2</sup>N.M.M. POR/P/5, 14 May 1841.

<sup>3</sup>Medical help was rare in private industry. Some Cornish mineowners and Welsh ironmasters provided medical assistance from a deduction on wages, while other employers might subscribe to the firm's sick club. It is hard to say how typical such practices were. See Pollard, Modern Management, p. 238.

Fear of losing the pension may well have brought caution into the minds of men who might otherwise have acted as union organisers. Yet the pension itself was part of a division in the workforce - between 'hired' men and 'established' - that was only one of a number of other divisions that might cause vertical differentiation within the workforce, within and beside the more common horizontal stratification of trades. 'Established' men were effectively permanent employees, sacked only in the last resort, while 'hired' men were temporary (although they formed a reservoir of experienced labour from which men could be recruited for the establishment) Of course, most private firms had a group of men for whom they tried to find regular work, and extra men were often recruited for busy periods on the understanding that they would be laid off when no longer required, even in highly skilled trades<sup>1</sup>. Yet such practices in civilian firms rarely carried such a highly valued benefit as the pension, the importance of which can be seen in the campaigns mounted when it was abolished, as in the 1830s, or could be extended, as in 1859<sup>2</sup>. Table Three shows that the majority of strikes were in fact among hired men, who did not stand to lose pensions.

The establishment carried a further divisive possibility in the opportunities it gave of promotion. The Committee on

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. R.Q. Gray, Labour Aristocracy, cit., pp. 50-2, 90.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Free Press, 18, 27 Apr., 4, 16 May 1839; H.T., 23 Apr. 1859.

Dockyard Economy reckoned that something like one man in thirteen could expect to be promoted to a position of some responsibility, be it leading man, writer, or whatever. Such opportunities were effectively restricted to men who were on the establishment<sup>1</sup>. Only one department was not covered by the principle of establishment, and this was the steam factory, which was supposedly run on the lines of a private business and employed only hired men. This did not stop the factory men from petitioning to be allowed to have pension rights, although they were concerned that the Admiralty should understand that this request implied no disrespect for political economy. Rather, the pension would enable the government to employ only 'good steady, and industrious workmen', and dismiss the elderly or unfit men with a clear conscience, in the safe knowledge that they would not have to enter the workhouse<sup>2</sup>.

Other pertinent divisions helped to undermine a sense of solidarity among the workforce. First after the gap between established and hired was the hierarchy of skill. The shipwrights in a petition of 1879 made the claim that they

consider our trade to be the leading one in H.M. Dockyard, from the multifarious duties which we have to perform, which duties are steadily increasing; for as your Lordships are well aware, there is scarcely any part of the construction of H.M. Ships which your Petitioners are not competent to undertake, and execute to your Lordships entire satisfaction<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Rep., cit., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 582.

<sup>3</sup>Petition of Established Shipwrights, Portsmouth Dockyard, Sept. 1879: Clegg Mss., M.R.C., 54/D0/5.

The riggers told their Lordships, in support of an 1859 pay petition, that they were 'mechanics' every bit as much as the sail- or ropemakers (they did not mention the shipwrights). The shipwrights rarely agreed to collective action with men from any other trade, although in 1865 they did hold a joint meeting with the caulkers. Even an attempt by the radical Free Press to break down shipwright exclusiveness in 1839 failed to elicit any more than a negative reply from 'the Branch of Shipwrights'. The shipwrights saw the other workmen as

our friends, and...we would readily cooperate with them in our endeavours for the general prosperity, which we have given proof of from time to time, if a chance of success was presented; but as they well know, this method has failed 1.

Nor did shipwrights alone see themselves as a cut above the plebs. The engineers in their 1858 petition took note of the fact that Naval Engineers had been given commissioned status with an equivalent rank to that of Master R.N., which allowed them into the wardroom. In an interesting turn of phrase, the Yard engineers took stock of this development as follows:

The sea-going portion of our profession has lately been recognized, and the position of the individual members improved, and we trust that the claims of our steam factory department may speedily be recognized also.

The notion that status was conferred by skill was so widely accepted that the secretary to the labourers' committee in

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 3 Sept. 1859, 19 Aug. 1865; Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Free Press, 27 Apr., 4 May 1839.

1866 compared his colleagues favourably with the mere scavenger's man or 'excavator': Yard labourers needed at least three years' experience before rising to the first class, and as assistants to the craftsmen were de facto trained specialists<sup>1</sup>.

Gradation by skill, although widely accepted as valid, implied a continuum rather than the sharp break between establishment and hired list. Indeed, the gradual continuum of the status hierarchy of skills constitutes one reason why I am unhappy with the notion of a sharply distinguished stratum of 'labour aristocrats'<sup>2</sup>. Yet there was one gulf within the Yard's workforce that was sharper than anything experienced in any civilian shipbuilding firm, and that was the gulf which separated free men from the convicts. Even the oakum boy could feel superior to the grey-suited, ankle-chained convict. The convicts did the dirtiest work, like loading coal or helping the men who did the less skilled types of painting on board the ships in ordinary<sup>3</sup>. Bonham

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<sup>1</sup>Rep. on Dockyard Economy, cit., p. 583; H.T., 12 May 1866.

<sup>2</sup>The classic account is now E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth Century Britain', repr. in Labouring Men 1968, 272-310. The idea, despite Hobsbawm's assertions that it was a Victorian 'commonplace', derives from Lenin: J. Field, 'Changing Concepts of the "Labor Aristocracy"', Radical History Review xix, 1978/9.

<sup>3</sup>ADM 1/3440, 27 Sept., 4 Oct. 1839.

Carter pointed out to the Commons the ill-feeling caused by the employment of convicts 'whilst free and honest men are unable to procure employment'<sup>1</sup>. Shipwrights who in the 1820s had agreed to work as labourers complained in 1839 that

it was no uncommon sight to behold the first naval artisans of the world yoked to a horse-collar by the side of convicted felons in droves of from 50 to 100, ...wearing themselves out by a species of labour totally unworthy of their talents, and despicable to their feelings as free men.

Indeed, they considered themselves as 'little better off... than the inmates of the Poor Law Bastiles'<sup>2</sup>. In 1847 Fincham ordered that Yard labourers were to replace convicts in jobs that involved mingling with free men, limiting convicts to isolated gang work<sup>3</sup>. It might also have been felt by the administration that the 'refractory' behaviour of the convicts (and they hardly had any incentive for working) in limiting their work levels, and the habit among dockyardmen of giving tobacco and other small luxuries to the convicts, made the practice of using them more trouble than it was worth<sup>4</sup>. What is more important, however, for this thesis is that the presence of the convicts severely undermined the bargaining position of labourers in particular<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Mirror of Parliament, 15 Apr. 1833.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Free Press, 18 Apr. 1839.

<sup>3</sup>ADM 7/594, 21 Oct. 1847.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; Timber Inspector's Letter Book, Dockyard Archives, 28 May 1850; H.T., 10 Sept. 1859.

<sup>5</sup>Many Yard labourers held pensions from one or other of the armed forces: in 1847, some 112 had a supplementary income of this sort: Parl. Papers 1847-8, xli, p.303. This may have eased their position somewhat, as may the eventual disappearance of convict labour (symbolized in the convicts' last task, the destruction of the hulk York by torchlight: Illustrated London News, 8 Apr. 1854 ).



One last division between the men seems to have had the paradoxical effect of intensifying sentiments of solidarity. This was the principle of classification, introduced during Sir James Graham's administration, by which each trade was divided into different categories receiving different wage rates<sup>1</sup>. The response of the men is interesting; although they evidently accepted the division by trade or skill as 'natural', the principle of classification appeared as most unnatural. It was, said Cotsell, the smith, 'derogatory to common justice'; moreover, by making a man's classification dependent upon the report of the officers, it allowed for favouritism. It was the subject of at least three petitions during the 'thirties: one in 1834 was signed by 1,057 'mechanics'; in 1835 1,130 Yardmen joined the protest; in 1836 the Mayor agreed to hold a town meeting on the subject, some 2,000 'civilian' inhabitants adding their names to the petition of 1,150 Dockyardmen. The Admiralty sat on the petitions for a year and a half before, in a passable imitation of the Circumlocution Office, deciding Not to Do Anything about them. The arguments used by the Yard workers against the classification system are familiar to anyone who has glanced at the debates between Robert Applegarth

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<sup>1</sup>J.M. Haas, 'Methods of Wage Payment in the Royal Dockyards, 1775-1865', Maritime History v, 1977, p. 101, discusses the details of the system. The First class consisted of some 20% of the ablest men, the Second of the vast majority, and the Third of those fools who had shown 'great insufficiency, negligence or misconduct'.

and puzzled members of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions over the unions' refusal to allow masters to set individual wage rates. The 1835 petition roundly denounced classification as

that most grievous and degrading system, as applied amongst workmen, vast numbers of whom are so equal in point of merit and workmanship as to render it impossible to draw, justly, any line of distinction between them <sup>1</sup>.

Hostility against classification seems to have declined somewhat through the forties<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps this was because almost all the trades found that they were in the second class: in 1834, for instance, there were 84 first class shipwrights, 47 third class, and 440 second class men. Yet in the 1890s the Admiralty found that the 'Trades' were unanimous against the system, and decided that it had better be ended<sup>3</sup>. The persistence of ill-feeling, even if not manifested in petitions, was due first to the men's reluctance to give their supervisors too much hold over them; second, however, the very idea of individual competition was 'degrading', and ran opposite to the whole weight of workplace custom.

Although divisions among the workforce may have played some part in weakening workplace solidarity, it would be wrong to see them as wholly responsible for the late arrival of trade unionism in Portsmouth Dockyard. It is worth noting that

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 12 Oct. 1835.

<sup>2</sup>Although in the fifties one leading man, John Hobbs, recalled that 'I was a first class man and had many enemies': Rep. Committee on Dockyard Economy, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup>Sel. Committee on Estimates, Parl. Papers 1847-48, xxi, pt. I, p. 792. Admiralty-Treasury Correspondence, P.R.O. ADM 116/374, 23, 26 Aug. 1893.

the divisions - including the most pertinent, between skilled and unskilled, and hired and established - worked in tandem with other characteristics of the Yard to ensure that the central groups of workers - notably the shipwrights - were reasonably satisfied with their work conditions, and at least unprepared to challenge them even to the limited extent of forming a trade union. Two areas will be examined in connection with this: first, distribution, in the form of the piece-work system which the Admiralty tried to use to increase productivity. Second, production, in the form of the labour processes and the nature of the control asserted by management over them. The two areas are strongly interconnected: it was the absence of a profit motive that the Admiralty saw as (and was not altogether wrong) the prime cause of ineffective control over the levels of production. The piece-rate system was an attempted answer to this perceived lack of control; but the workers' ability to retain a measure of control at the most basic levels of the labour process, made the piece work system extremely difficult to operate.

Piece work had been introduced in 1775, although resistance from the workforce meant that it was some time before it could be firmly established<sup>1</sup>. The system was known as 'Task and Job', and under it every task or job had a price. A job

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<sup>1</sup>See Haas, 'Methods of Wage Payment', passim, for this section.

price could be set for work at the docks or slips, with the companies receiving so much per ton between them as they built or demolished a vessel. Alternatively, it could be set on more orthodox principles - by the piece produced, for instance. Rates were paid on the basis of calculations made by the Yard Measurer and his staff. The piece rate never entirely replaced day pay, however, and indeed between 1833 and 1847 piece work ceased to operate entirely.

Before 1833 task and job rates seem to have been somewhat rough and ready, depending upon precedent and upon the eye and judgement of the superior officers. In early 1816, for example, prices paid for dismantling old vessels varied from 5s. per ton on the Malacca to 7s. per ton on the Vengeance<sup>1</sup>. In some parts of the Yard, day pay predominated. In the millwrights' shop, for instance, the entire workforce was on day pay, possibly because they were engaged chiefly upon 'one-off' jobs that defied convenient measurement. In the wood and metal mills, both systems seem to have operated. The piece system was open to 'abuse' in a number of ways. First, men could work just so hard as to earn a little more than the day pay. In the Wood Mills, for instance, men who were paid a maximum of 3s 1d when employed on machines on day pay, were averaging 3s 5d a day on task and job in 1822,

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<sup>1</sup>P.R.O. ADM 106/1888, 1 Jan., 14 Feb., 4 Mar. 1816.

which compensated them for losses that might have occurred due to the fact that they were working short time. In the metal mills, working full time even in 1822, brass and iron founders (with a day rate of 5s 0d) were earning 6s to 8s; the best-paid furnacemen, averaging 7s 10d under task and job, would have received 4s 6d under day pay. The system was open to more dubious abuses, including of course straightforward fiddling. James Knight, for instance, a furnaceman in the metal mill, was paid by the amount of slag metal that he melted down, to produce clean copper. He was taking pieces of slag that had been weighed out to him, and returning them to the original pile, so that he seemed to have smelted more than was actually the case<sup>1</sup>. Graham's response to practices such as these, including the 'ca' canny' that was customary, was to abolish piecework and set a predictable level of day pay.

At about the same time that piece work was abolished, the Yards also lost the small daily payment known as 'chip money'. This was a cash sum (ranging from 6d for shipwrights and other tradesmen to 3d or 4d for carpenters, coopers or smiths, and 3d or 2d for labourers or boys), paid in lieu of the right to carry waste wood out of the Yard. Although the shipwrights had petitioned for a cash sum in 1783, the Admiralty found a compelling argument only when Sir Samuel Bentham stopped a group of men from leaving the Yard, bought their 'chips' off them, and re-assembled them into a

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<sup>1</sup>ADM 106/1892, 21, 24, 26 Sept., 25 Nov. 1832.

spar<sup>1</sup>. The Admiralty found the payment 'in its principle objectionable', and in January 1830 offered the workers the choice of further dismissals or the loss of chips; they took the latter. Abolition of chip money reduced the contribution of custom to the determination of wage levels, making them (in Fincham's words) 'the exclusive direct rewards of service'<sup>2</sup>. In this area, as in so many others, the state offered an example in 'capitalist rationality' to the actual, imperfect capitalists of the time<sup>3</sup>.

When task and job was re-introduced in 1847, it was modified considerably from the costly and inefficient system abolished by Graham. At first, there was a kind of measured day work:<sup>4</sup> men had a specific upper limit to their pay, and the amount of work they performed determined how closely their wages approached that upper limit. After eighteen months, the Admiralty expressed great satisfaction with the system, but reminded Superintendents that measuring staff were an instrument directed at greater self-supervision by the gangs:

The value of the instrument will depend upon the discretion with which it is used - the firmness with which the power of mulcting gangs found in default is exercised by the master shipwright - the attention paid by the superintendent to the working of the system generally - and

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<sup>1</sup>Lady Bentham, 'On Certain Statements contined in a Communication to the Statistical Section at Belfast, in September 1852, entitled "Statistics of Portsea and Portsmouth Dockyard"', Journal of the Statistical Society, xvi, 1853, p. 366. Chips were abolished in 1801.

<sup>2</sup>Admiralty Order, 9 Jan. 1830, Parl. Papers 1831-32, xvii, p. 573; Fincham, op.cit., p. 205.

<sup>3</sup>Journeyman coopers in Birmingham, for instance, complained in 1834 that their masters had 'taken the privilege of our chips, without giving an equivalent wither in beer or beer money, as is usual in other places'; Pioneer, 8 Feb. 1834 (I owe this reference to Mr C. Behagg).

<sup>4</sup>Robert Ase, Inspector of Shipwrights, must have had twentieth-century social historians in mind when he described it as "the system of measured daywork", Rep. Committee on Dockyard Economy, p. 259.

the impression thus diffused amongst the inspectors and men, that the means which the Superintendent has of estimating accurately the exertions of all under him, will materially guide him in his recommendations for promotion.

The intention was economy, and it clearly succeeded. James Bennett, the timber inspector, told the Committee of Revision in 1848 that sawyers performed 25% more work under partial measurement than they did on day pay for the same cost. They were, he wrote, so worried at the prospect of losing wages or being reported to the Admiralty that 'all concerned are from different motives interested in expediting the duty'. Unfortunately for Bennett, this meant that all conspired to use only the easiest wood to work, leaving him with piles of unused and unwanted second-best timber. As for labourers, their leading men did their own measuring and were unwilling to risk any loss of wages to themselves. There was another difficulty:

with respect to Convict labour, ...many of the Guards decline giving in their work to the Measurer, under the plea that if they devote their time to the measurement and entry of work, their men will escape.

As for his own department, 'a great portion of the work is comparatively insignificant, and so miscellaneous, consisting of short & long journeys', that it was impossible to measure. Indeed the list of prices for labourers' work alone contained 116 items, ranging from carrying anchors and other heavy metal (1s 8d per ton per thousand yards) to sweeping up (6d per cartful of dirt)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 3 Feb. 1849; Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Free Press, 18 Apr. 1839; Timber Inspector's Letter Book, 21 Oct. 1848, 28 May 1850; Scheme of Prices, 1848, ADM 7/594.

In 1854, as Britain drifted into war with Russia, the level of activity in the Yard rose. As the Admiralty Surveyor observed,

it became necessary, in order to meet the pressure of work at a time when it was very difficult to obtain more Men, to pay the men by Task and Job to stimulate them to the utmost exertion <sup>1</sup>.

The scheme of prices (laid down in 1820 and revised nine years later) was hastily revised, in particular to take account of steam and the screw propellor, although it remained extremely complex. Under shipwrights' work alone some 2,160 items appeared, many estimated in a hurry. At first, wide variations in earnings appeared. In general they rose: shipwrights receiving about 4s a day before the War could earn 5s or 6s during it. But men at the docksides, who might have to spend time fetching and carrying, earned around 1s weekly less than men in the workshops. Some shipwrights, indeed, engaged on what was effectively labouring work, or assisting engineers, were still receiving 4s on day pay<sup>2</sup>.

The system was altered slightly to account for the shipwrights' objections. However, it remained something that the men could to some extent manipulate to maintain their earnings at a level above that of day pay. Most suspicious of all was the miraculous tendency of wages to reach roughly the same level whether it be summer or winter, despite the fact that hours, as we have seen, altered with the season. (See Table Five)

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<sup>1</sup>P.R.O. ADM 89/1, 26 Oct. 1855.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 3 Feb. 1849; ADM 89/1, 26 Oct. 1855; ADM 89/2, 10, 16, 17, 26 Jan. 1856.



TABLE FOUR: DAILY EARNINGS OF SELECTED TRADES, 1857.

Trade	Day Pay	Task and Job Earnings		
		2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Shipwrights	4/6	5/11	5/10	5/8

TABLE FIVE: DAILY EARNINGS OF SELECTED TRADES, 1857-58

Trade	Day Pay	Checked day pay		Task and Job
		(a) Summer	(b) Winter	
Shipwrights	4/6	5/0½	4/9½	5/8
Joiners	3/10	4/1	4/1½	5/0
Smiths	5/6	6/0	6/3	6/0

Notes: 'summer' 3rd quarter 1857; 'winter' 4th quarter 1857.  
All Task and Job rates are an average for 1858.

Source: Committee on Dockyard Economy, Rep., pp. 147-8.

In summer 1860, it was found that the average earnings of the shipwrights lay between 5s 5d and 5s 7d. Yet it was almost impossible to undermine the workers' positions within the existing authority structure of the Yard. While James Bennett favoured day work to prevent wastage of materials, the Committee on Dockyard Economy thought that there should be fewer attempts at revising price lists since these only encouraged workers to limit output and preserve existing piece rates. The Admiralty on the other hand favoured task and job work, which combined reasonable speed of production with the customary quality required for naval vessels, denying that the profit motive was any guide or ought to be where a use value was concerned<sup>1</sup>. The piece rate system,

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<sup>1</sup>R.C. on Dockyard Control and Management, Rep., Parl. Papers 1861, xxvi, p. 509; Bennett in ADM 7/594; Rep. Committee on Dockyard Economy, p. 23; Memo of First Lord, In Observations...on the Report of the Committee on Dockyard Economy, Parl. Papers, 1860, xlii, pp. 387-9.

then, did not work unambiguously in the interests of management. Perhaps because of the non-competitive market position of the Yards, the need to produce specific items on a large scale with a guaranteed level of quality (itself judged and determined by custom, or 'naval tradition') meant that piece work ensured that workers 'supervised themselves' yet kept up a reasonable level of output of a desired quality. The Yard workers in turn, by carefully regulating their own productivity, could at least *make certain* that they earned more under piece rates than they did under time rates.

The capacity of Yard workers to benefit from piece work itself rested upon their ability to regulate production. It has been shown already that certain groups of workers experienced changes in their methods of working, and that these often brought the possibility of greater regulation by management. The group which experienced such changes to the greatest extent was the smiths, although the factory was also subject to 'a greater amount of control and subordination' than the shipwrights' department<sup>1</sup>. The changes introduced in the smithery led to resistance from workers; while the factory, as a new department, could impose regulations of work without disrupting existing customs. Yard labourers seem to have experienced a type of discipline that was more appropriate to the convicts: in 1842, for instance, after the government had agreed to reduce the number of convicts employed, 100 new labourers were taken on. According to the local paper

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 69 above.

(which condemned the authorities, to its credit), these men 'were subjected to a trial of strength'; they had to 'lift a Boatswain's jack, weighing 180 lbs., off the ground, put it on their shoulders, and walk with it about 200 yards. More than one unfortunate man has been ruptured by this over-exertion, and in one instance blood flowed from the nose and ears of the candidate'<sup>1</sup>. The Admiral Superintendent in 1859 reported that he considered the Yard labourers to be 'derived from an inferior class', and compared them unfavourably with the 'artisans'<sup>2</sup>. Yet even some labourers could look forward to obtaining more responsible posts, such as that of assistant fitters.

Discipline for some groups of workers was imposed and regulated from above. Yet for other groups a certain amount of autonomy was permitted, and even encouraged<sup>3</sup>. These included above all the shipwrights and the caulkers, upon whose individual and group skills depended the final product, the ships. In 1859, the Assistant Master Shipwright insisted that his department would not be benefited 'by any further subdivision of labour', although it was shown that shipwrights were doing work that could equally well be done by labourers<sup>4</sup>. A more important test of the extent to which the Admiralty was prepared to accept craft custom was the question of

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 18 Dec. 1843.

<sup>2</sup>Observations...On the Report of the Committee on Dockyard Economy, cit., p. 287.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. the discussion by A. Friedmann, 'Responsible Autonomy vs. Direct Control over the Labour Process', Capital and Class, i, 1977, 43-55.

<sup>4</sup>Rep. Committee on Dockyard Economy, p. 261. James Bennett's view (p. 268) was that 'a considerable part of the building of our ships might be done by labourers'.

apprenticeship. In the later eighteenth century, the civil servants of the Navy Board had considered that apprenticeship was itself a guarantee of quality, placing a high value upon properly indentured men<sup>1</sup>. The abolition of the Navy Board meant that Yards came under the more direct consideration of the Admiralty Board - that is, of senior naval officers and politicians, with rather different perspectives than were found among the commissioners of the Navy Board. Only once, in 1840, did apprenticeship as such become an issue, when the men discovered that some recent recruits from merchant yards had not been indentured. The shipwrights demanded 'proof of their right to the trade' from any new entrants, and one 'illegal' man was sacked as a result, while others felt it better to resign. The Admiralty accepted the fact of the dismissal, although it wrote to the Superintendent expressing 'our surprise' that the men should interfere with the master's right to employ whom he chose. The Admiralty protest was probably largely symbolic; the next time it advertized, in Hull, for shipwrights it stipulated that applicants would have the proper indentures<sup>2</sup>.

For most of this period, then, the shipwrights were able to assert partial control over the labour process. When they were hit by sudden technological change, with the transfer to metal shipbuilding in the late 1860s, a number of factors intervened to modify their response. (See chapter two above). First, the change came at a time of mass

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, op.cit., pp. 233-8.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 27 Apr., 29 June 1840.

redundancies, so that men saw the best strategy as one of accommodation rather than refusal; second, there remained a good deal of work for wooden shipwrights, not only on repair or construction of wood ships but even on the new metal vessels; third, the Portsmouth men had before them the edifying example of private shipwrights who had tried to ignore metal building, to their loss. The shipwrights accepted metal shipbuilding, and indeed made it their own. However, this is to extend the analysis beyond 1870 and into the last decades of the century. The important point here is that craft control (it is worth restating that this is a matter of degree, not an absolute) locked into other patterns of employment in the Yard, such as skill differentials and the benefits of regular, pensioned employment, to make trade unionism seem unnecessary as a response to the problems that workers faced. Workers could adopt militant tactics within the workplace when needed, as has been seen; they could also adopt 'pacific' tactics such as migration, as did factory men in the late 'sixties when they had pay grievances. The Yard men also had strategies of action which were based outside the Yard, however.

The Yard's authority structure contrasted strongly with that of most industry in nineteenth century Britain. It seemed, to workmen, a hierarchy that if not open to all, at least was not closed to all of their ranks, and access was to be had on clearly defined terms (whether those terms were adhered to was another matter). Second, the Yard was outside the normal pattern of boom and slump, and in general

experienced constant employment, which set the men apart from the majority of workers in what was a highly unstable industry. Third, the employer was absent, was open to political pressure, and was not engaged in exploiting them (in the sense of trying to make a profit); although engaged in trying to employ them at the least possible price, this was because of political pressures rather than profit margins. Dockyardmen were therefore likely to defend their interest, by taking organization, and thus struggle, out of the confines of the Yard.

First, the Yard men naturally did not experience the local bourgeoisie as immediate exploiters of their labour power. Indeed, in so far as the local bourgeoisie profited by providing goods and services to the dockyardmen and their families, it shared a common interest with the workers as against the government. A sense of shared interests was probably assisted by the absence of dockyard officials from local political leadership (measured in terms of local authorities, or of the local parties), and even from many visible social leisure pursuits, which might have led dockyardmen to have identified the local bourgeoisie as identified with the Yard authorities. When difficulties occurred with the Admiralty that could not be solved by face-to-face meetings with officials, or by petitioning the Admiralty, the workmen could turn to local political leaders as allies. On a number of occasions the dockyardmen succeeded in getting the Mayor to call a town meeting, and they could be fairly certain of winning a warm response. In 1822, for instance,

Samuel Spicer chaired a meeting which demanded the removal of the convicts. In 1866 Edward M. Wells chaired a meeting which called for a rise in labourers' pay, while the Town Council petitioned against the 16th clause of the reform bill (disenfranchising dockyard voters). Ropemakers were represented in a deputation to the Admiralty by the Mayor, three aldermen, and the two M.P.s.<sup>1</sup> The examples could be multiplied; the point is that such action could be successful - as was the labourers' pay campaign, and the attempt to withdraw the 16th clause of the reform bill - and was therefore a rational option open to the Yard workers as workers.

Second, in so far as Yard men did respond to exploitation by anybody, they were likely to organize as consumers. Hence the constant attention paid to cooperation by the Dockyardmen, from as early as the 1790s. The Dock Mill Society was first set up in May 1796, with the intention of supplying bread to members cheaper than did private bakers. This society was wound up in November 1815 when the Admiralty indicated that it was going to extend the north of the Yard, enclosing the land on which the Society Mill stood. The Yard men formed another society, producing bread and flour at Southsea; they had already, in 1815, set up a brewery at Croxton Town to provide beer, and in the autumn of 1816 they extended their activities to include purchase of meat on the hoof and its

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 2, 9 Sept. 1822, 24, 28 Mar., 2, 12 May 1866, 20 May 1868.

distribution to the members<sup>1</sup>. The Co-ops were fiercely defended by the Dockyardmen. It was said that the Brewery had some 2,000 members, and that over 1,700 took part in the meat co-op. Clearly this marked a considerable loss to local tradesmen, and in particular the bakers who petitioned the Navy Board, complaining that the opening of the Union Society to non-dockyard families was injuring 'the fair trader'. On 22 March 1816 some 500 or 600 dockyardmen assembled outside the house of one of the main petitioners, Davey of Charlotte Street, 'in a very tumultuous manner, blowing horns, and offered some violence, by throwing stones and breaking his windows'. The Mayor did not appear until the following day, when he led a group of constables to Davey's bakery. But that was the last that was heard of the petition. There were one or two letters to the press, complaining that the dockyardmen were pauperizing tradesmen, and arguing (in one case) that 'as the people of the Yard are paid in ready money for their labour before 1813, they had been paid by promissory note<sup>7</sup>, they have the means of going to market on as good terms as they ought to have'<sup>2</sup>. The co-op continued.

It is not clear at what time the Dock Mill Society closed<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Articles for constituting...the United Society of the People belonging to His Majesty's Dockyard Near Portsmouth, 10 May 1796, P.C.L.: Hants. Chronicle, 25 Mar. 1816; Hants. Courier, 25 Mar. 1816; H.T., 6 Feb., 21 Aug., 27 Nov. 1815, 18 Mar., 6 May, 10 June, 7 Oct., 11 Nov. 1816, 27 Jan., 10, 17 Mar., 13, 27 Oct. 1817.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 18 Mar. 1816, 27 Apr. 1817; Hants. Chronicle, 24 Mar. 1817; Hants. Courier, 25 Mar. 1817.

<sup>3</sup>Horne gives 1834 as the date of liquidation, and reckons that the mill 'stood derelict for over 40 years': 'Britain's First Co-op in Portsmouth?', Hampshire, March 1969, p. 30; Horne Mss., Index, P.C.R.O. 404A. However, he gives no source for this statement, and the claim that the mill was derelict cannot have been true. Cf. also Gates, op.cit., p.32.



A Mill belonging to the Society was offered for sale in 1830; but as the Society had repossessed its Flathouse mill once the Admiralty withdrew its intended extensions, it is hard to say which mill it was that was being sold<sup>1</sup>. The Flathouse mill certainly came up for sale in 1832, although whether for the first time is impossible to say<sup>2</sup>. When a group of Chartists and dockyardmen met in 1847 to set up a Working Man's Co-operative Society, they spoke as though the Union Society was a thing of the past. Yet the 1859 Directory published by William White said that 'The Dock Mill Society and Bread Company was established in 1814.... Mr Charles Barnes is the manager. The society occupies the Dock Mill and has several retail shops'. In 1861, the Portsmouth Guardian carried an advert from Barnes, calling for a meeting of the Dock Mill Society to hear a report from its auditors. Moreover, in 1852 the Society issued a handbill saying that it had changed its retail outlet. Then again, when a radical-led meeting on the Common agreed to set up a co-op in 1856, one committee member said that 'they might be taunted with the fate of the Dock Brewery and the Dock Mill; but he begged to inform the tradesmen of the Borough that the Dockyardmen of the present day were not the same as those of 1817 and 1818<sup>3</sup>. It is almost impossible to say exactly

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 3 May 1830.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 2 July 1832.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 6 Mar. 1847; White, op.cit., p. 278; Portsmo Guardian, 31 Oct. 1861; Dock Mill Society handbill, May 1852, P.C.L.

what had happened to the Mill Society (although the Brewery Society continue to function until 1851, when its mortgagee seized the premises and had it sold; it had remained exclusively for dockyardmen until the last year of its existence<sup>1</sup>). All that can be said is that dockyard workers persistently tried to bypass the free retail market for 'necessities'. By the fifties, this was by no means

TABLE SIX: OCCUPATIONS OF SHAREHOLDERS IN PORTSMOUTH AND  
GOSPORT COOPERATIVE, 6 MARCH 1857

Shipwrights	226	44%
Ropemakers	76	15
Labourers	23	4
Seaman R.N.	18	3
Boilermaker	18	3
Rigger	16	3
Smiths	12	2
Shopkeepers, pubs	10	2
Women	7	1
Carpenter, joiner	6	1
Sawyer	5	1
Sailmaker	5	1
Others	24	5
None known	76	15
Total:	519	100

Source: P.R.O. BT 41/572/3126.

exclusively confined to the dockyardmen as it had been in 1815. (Table Six). The 1857 Co-op included a small leavening

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 8 Nov. 1851, 28 Aug. 1852.

of men from the 'middling classes': a schoolteacher, a master printer (Gardner, of Queen Street), eight publicans, a writer, a boatswain, a surveyor and a policeman. Yet this co-op, inevitably, remained largely composed of dockyardmen; and so far as can be gauged, all the committee members worked there as well.

The characteristic organizations of the skilled dockyardmen, and particularly the shipwrights, took two forms. There was informal on-the-job craft administration over production using 'ad hoc unionism' of the type described so well by David Wilson; and formal organizations outside the Yard, directed towards winning support in the town or at protecting the workers not as producers but as consumers. Other than the Dockyard, there is little to report, for in the absence of organized union movements newspapers and other contemporary sources rarely described industrial relations. The only serious movements to occur were among building workers, watermen, and tailors. None of these trades was well-organized by 1870, and indeed Portsmouth's union movement as a mass movement seems to stem only from the 1890s, although this is something that awaits further research.

The Watermen's Association was formed largely as a defensive measure. Although the watermen were governed by Act of Parliament, and limited in number, as well as in the amount of goods or passengers they were allowed to carry and the prices they were to charge, the trade may have become overcrowded during the Wars, and was certainly further depressed by the establishment of the floating bridge. As early as 1843 it

was argued that the watermen could not afford to pay increased licence fees. By the 1860s 'illegal' men were operating large wherries, carrying more than the authorized eight passengers; there was also competition from steamers in the Solent<sup>1</sup>. Established in the 1850s, with radical assistance (John Augustus Howell Howell presided at one of its earlier meetings), the Association had 106 members in 1864 and 103 a year later. Although in 1866 it prevented the Ferry Commissioners from raising licence fees, it was unable in the long run to prevent the decline of the trade. The passage to Gosport was taken over by the floating bridge, that to the Spithead moorings by steam launches. By 1870 it was said that Watermen could expect at best to earn 5s a week. By the 1880s, people remembered the days 'before they invented the noisy little steam launches to kill the fish, to tear down the banks of the rivers, and to take the bread out of the mouths of the old wherryman'<sup>2</sup>. The watermen had been a picturesque group, of course, and were remembered with some nostalgia. They had been given to flamboyant behaviour, drawing from memories of older traditions such behaviour as a mock duel followed by 'rough music', or a wedding at which a pole was carried about with slogans and kitchen utensils tied onto it. While it is unlikely that any strategy could have prevented the trade's decline, it is instructive that

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 11 Dec. 1837 says that in 1836 there were 478 watermen, declining to 427 by late 1837. See also H.T., 13 Aug. 1859, 4 Apr. 1866; Hanseard, 16 May 1845.

<sup>2</sup>P.C.R.O., CM 1/3, 2 Feb. 1857; H.T., 13 Feb. 1864, 18 Feb. 1865, 29 Sept., 6 Oct. 1866, 29 Jan. 1870; Besant and Rice, op.cit., p. 198.

the characteristic method of action was the petition: the written appeal to superiors<sup>1</sup>.

Trade organisation in the clothing trades was also predominantly defensive in origin. Just as many watermen were self-employed or worked as assistants to self-employed men, tailors and other male clothing workers tended to work in small shops, or sometimes at home for a putter-out. These conditions obviously reduced the potential for solidarity. In 1856, for instance, the bootmakers managed to impose a common closing time on the chief Portsea shops, only to see one Queen Street shop working on after the agreed hours. The frustrated shoemakers could find no better response than to assault workmen as they left the 'illegal' shop<sup>2</sup>. I have found no evidence that the shoemakers formed a permanent trade society in this period, but the tailors joined the Manchester Tailors' Amalgamated Association in 1866, with perhaps 200 members<sup>3</sup>. However, the majority of clothing trades workers were women, often young girls, working at home or in factories on piece rates. Discipline in these factories seems to have been pretty much what the employer decided it would be: Chillcott's, for example, was prosecuted in 1870 for working its employees after the hours permitted in law; Helby and Sons in contrast held an annual works

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<sup>1</sup>Hants. Courier, 27 Feb. 1815; H.T., 1 Nov. 1862.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 27 Dec. 1866.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 29 Aug. 1866, 3 July 1867.

outing to Rowlands Castle. There was, it seems, no trade unionism among the women until 1883, when the Women's Provident and Protective League set up a short-lived branch after a strike<sup>1</sup>. In these industries, the few masters who employed more than a handful of workers were able to dictate to the workers via the piece rate, which (because of a highly unfavourable labour market) probably did not work to the advantage of employers or workers but rather led to the proliferation of both.

In the building trades fluidity between master and men remained an obstacle to organization. Two factors permit modification of this generalisation. Firstly, large contracts, both for local and national government, brought large numbers of men onto a single job, and this might lead to organization, as in 1865 when striking woodworkers on the Eastney Barracks set up an A.S.C.J. branch. Second, highly skilled craftsmen might be organized, as were the masons (see Figure Two).

Indeed, the masons illustrate both possibilities, reaching a peak of membership in 1848 - a year when extensions to the Yard and the erection of the steam factory increased the number of masons in the town. Normally, however, there was probably some fluidity between master and men, and conflicts between the two were probably viewed as temporary and due to short-sightedness rather than the opposition of interests. A wage dispute in 1825 led to a rise of 20% being granted by builders and master carpenters, while in 1861 there was a

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<sup>1</sup>Child Employment Commission, Rep., Parl. Papers 1864 xxii, pp. 129, 150-6; H.T., 13 Aug., 24 Sept. 1870; Women's Union Journal, Dec. 1886.

branch of bricklayers (Figure Three). Only from the 1870s did unions establish themselves firmly in the building industry; by then, the distance between master and men was opening, little healed by the establishment of the Portsmouth Master Builders' Association, while the greater formality of building contracts allowed workers to exploit time limit clauses during disputes<sup>1</sup>. A small-scale, diffuse industry, then, could experience some organization; P.M.B.A. records seem to suggest that a major element in unionization was the increasing tendency of masters to challenge existing work customs - presumably a feature of the growing distance between master and men.

Elsewhere, the evidence suggests that there was very little organization indeed. Openings for small employers and independent units in the retail trades meant that this large workforce remained largely without formal representation; early closing associations were active among clothing assistants from at least the 1830s, but there was a highly over-stocked labour market for shop assistants, disproportionately swollen by youths and school-leavers and therefore of necessity difficult to control until compulsory schooling was introduced. Rather than try to restrict entry into the occupation,

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<sup>1</sup>See e.g. the position of a contractor for the Lunatic Asylum; Boro. of Portsmouth Master Builders' Association, Minutes, 8, 13, 22 June 1876, P.C.R.O. 934A. H.T., 21 Mar. 1825, 20 July, 24 Aug. 1861, 18 Nov., 9 Dec. 1865, 2 June 1866; Portsmo Times, 16 Nov. 1860; Portsmo Chronicle, 31 Aug. 1861.

the assistants tried 'legislative' approaches, such as petitions to the Mayor and other local citizens. Time and time again, attempts to limit the hours of opening in the main shopping centres failed, because one or two shops in the main centres and many more in the poorer districts failed to observe the new hours. Afraid of competition from 'illegal' shops, the wealthier drapers and tailors of Queen Street and High Street would return to their old hours<sup>1</sup>. Printing, in contrast, was a trade which possessed a small workforce, highly skilled and working in compact numbers. At least one journeyman printer was an active reformer: George Hind, who worked on the Telegraph, was in the Landport Reform Association, on the Committee of the Portsmouth Mechanics' Institute, and was secretary of the Ship St. Alban's Friendly Society<sup>2</sup>. In 1841 the operative printers met to set up a tramping fund to relieve members of their trade who came to the town looking for work (a fund that the masters also supported)<sup>3</sup>. Yet despite such evidence of willingness and ability to organize, it does not seem that the Typographical Society had a branch in the town until quite late in the century, although even a small county town like Dorchester could boast its 'society men'<sup>4</sup>. Even more

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. Portsmo, Portsea and Gosport Free Press, 11 Apr. 1839; H.T., 23 Nov. 1838, 1 Apr. 1848. R.E. Davies of the Landport Drapery Bazaar, himself a Liberal and a rather lukewarm supporter of the Reform League, took the step of ignoring other shopkeepers and shutting at 8 pm on Saturday in 1863, but he seems to have remained unusual (as the L.D.B. was unusual in its size): H.T., 17 Jan.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 19 Apr. 1840, 10 Oct. 1842.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 3 Oct. 1842.

<sup>4</sup>J.W. Crompton, 'Account of Printers' Strikes and Trades' Unions since January 1845', in Nat. Assoc. for the Promotion of Social Science (1860), cit., pp. 91-2.



than in the building trade, printworkers were unlikely to see themselves as having interests that were seriously separate from those of their masters until the industry became dominated by the newsprint giants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The evidence examined in this chapter, then, comes mainly from the dockyard. This does not mean that there was no conflict in other trades, just that such conflict was 'normal' and therefore unreported, or perhaps was considered so abnormal that it ended in the police courts<sup>1</sup>. It is reasonable to regard industrial relations in many of these occupations as different in kind from those relations which were characterized by strong trade unionism. And in certain respects, we can say that the town as a whole was marked for its lack of any serious contribution during this period to what was, after all, a remarkably vital trade union movement in Britain<sup>2</sup>. Although much of the workforce was highly skilled, well-read, and for most of the period securely in enjoyment of apprenticeship restrictions, it managed to do without trade unions entirely. Instead, Portsmouth saw another side of the 'making' of the English working class. There were innumerable appeals to honoured masters, signed by the 'humble petitioners' and 'servants'. The language of deference could be met by a poetry of paternalism, at least where the Admiralty and its

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<sup>1</sup>Embezzling, discussed in ch. ten, was by no means confined to the Dockyard. Bakers, barmen, cab drivers, laundry women and needlewomen were all prosecuted in this period for stealing from their employers.

<sup>2</sup>G.D.H. Cole, 'Some Notes on British Trade Unionism in the Third Quarter of the Nineteenth Century', Int. Rev. for Social History, ii, 1937, pp. 1-23. A.E. Musson, British Trade Unions, 1800-75, 1972, pp. 49 - 63.

'countenances and indulgences' were involved. Yet if this was a paternalist system<sup>1</sup>, it was one that rested upon a recognition, by the Admiralty, that there were limits upon its authority which it might be better not to expose to questioning. If warships were to be produced, they were constructed very largely on the lines and at a pace which was accepted by the shipwright companies that hammered, shaped and nailed the wood. Outside the Yard, in cases such as the building and printing trades, the small scale of enterprise and the probable hope of becoming a master oneself some day meant that there was no strongly articulated antagonism between men and master - or, just as importantly, between master and men. For different reasons, we could expect to find the same accommodation over the labour process as was found in the Yard. In the putting-out industries, and the retail trades, employer control was much greater. In retailing it was secured through the youthful nature of the labour market, which made assistants easy to replace, by the competitive nature of retail trading, and possibly the pressures upon assistants hopeful of promotion, retention, or even future independence, to behave in a deferential, obedient manner. In the domestic clothing trades, a disastrously over-stocked labour market enabled employers to control levels of production by simple methods: low pay was the chief of these, and the most potent symbol of sweating. All had in

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<sup>1</sup>The literature on the subject of paternalism is vast. The flavour may be sampled in A. Hall, 'Patron-Client Relations', Journal of Peasant Studies, i, 1974, pp.506-9.

common, despite their differences, the absence of formal trade unionism.

Returning briefly to the themes which arose at the beginning of the chapter, what seem to be the implications of workplace relations for the social process as a whole? Firstly, for the workers themselves, it seems probable that the social order would appear to them as connected only in certain distinctive ways. If for workers in mines or textile factories, the connections between work, exploitation, and politics were visible in very immediate ways<sup>1</sup>, workers in Portsmouth would probably have a more benevolent view of local political figures, whom they tried to recruit to their industrial campaigns. National political figures would be judged by rather different standards, of course; Baring became particularly unpopular, for instance, for failing to use his position as First Lord to benefit Portsmouth. National politics was judged as it did, or did not, profit the town: who 'the town' was was then the central question. Given that almost every local inhabitant who had to work for a living depended upon the dockyard, from the humble stallholder selling his relishes at the dockyard gates to the lawyer waiting for his fees, the question admitted a fairly easy answer. Workers throughout the town, but most especially in the dockyard, expected local political leaders to act on behalf of themselves. Yard workers very likely considered the Yard authority system itself as hierarchically

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<sup>1</sup>Foster, op.cit., pp. 193-4; A. Campbell, op.cit.; cf. G.J. Crossick, Ph.D., ch. vi.

organized, not dependent upon a dichotomous split between property owners and propertyless workers. The hierarchy itself might be legitimate or not, and complaints that the non-publication of examination results were disaffecting workers continued into the 1870s; yet the very existence of grumbling indicates that these workers had definite expectations about the way the hierarchy ought to be recruited. Its existence, and its perception as such, were not at stake; this too marked a difference from the situation of many other nineteenth century industrial workers.

Workers' attitudes, crystallized in a set of expectations about how local political leaders and Yard industrial management ought to behave, affected the ideology of the local bourgeoisie as well as the Admiralty. Neither seems to have had very much time for political economy, at least from the 1840s onwards, and as has been seen the Admiralty defined its position quite differently from that of a private industrial employer. Neither the Portsmouth bourgeoisie nor the Admiralty felt themselves in accord with the notion that government ought to model itself upon the successful private employer. In some instances, there was an explicit (if hardly theoretical) rejection of liberal economics. Arthur Cudlipp, a retailer and Chairman of the local Workingmen's Conservative Association, gave one example of this 'gut' rejection at a town meeting in favour of higher labourers' pay in 1866:

while political economists talked of our great progression, they little knew of the weekly or daily ordeal through which the lower orders

had to pass. While the enormous increase of the sum realized by income tax might prove that the wealth of the country was increasing, in his opinion the poverty was increasing in an inverse ratio 1.

My impression is that arguments of this sort were more likely to find favour among the local bourgeoisie than the explication of metaphors indulged in by most political economists.

The fact that local bourgeois prosperity was linked to the dockyard's activity, then, ensured that the workforce's appeal for political leadership would not be ignored. As important was the possibility of the local bourgeoisie defining itself in terms of a potential divergence of interests between itself and the state. While the state could act as a representative of the 'national interest' in demanding economies, it could hardly suggest that such cuts were in the interests of Portsmouth's shopkeepers or ratepayers. Despite local apathy or repudiation of political economy, anti-centralization could be a strong force in Portsmouth, even if in the end a strong state was in 'the town's' interests. In immediate terms, this meant something of a dissociation between several local groups, who in terms of economic situation can be regarded as equally members of the bourgeoisie. The dockyard authorities were always isolated from other groups, for a variety of reasons. First, their interests lay in carrying out Admiralty orders, whatever they might be, rather than in defending 'the town'. Further, any political expression on their part was likely to be met with a howl of

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 12 May 1866.

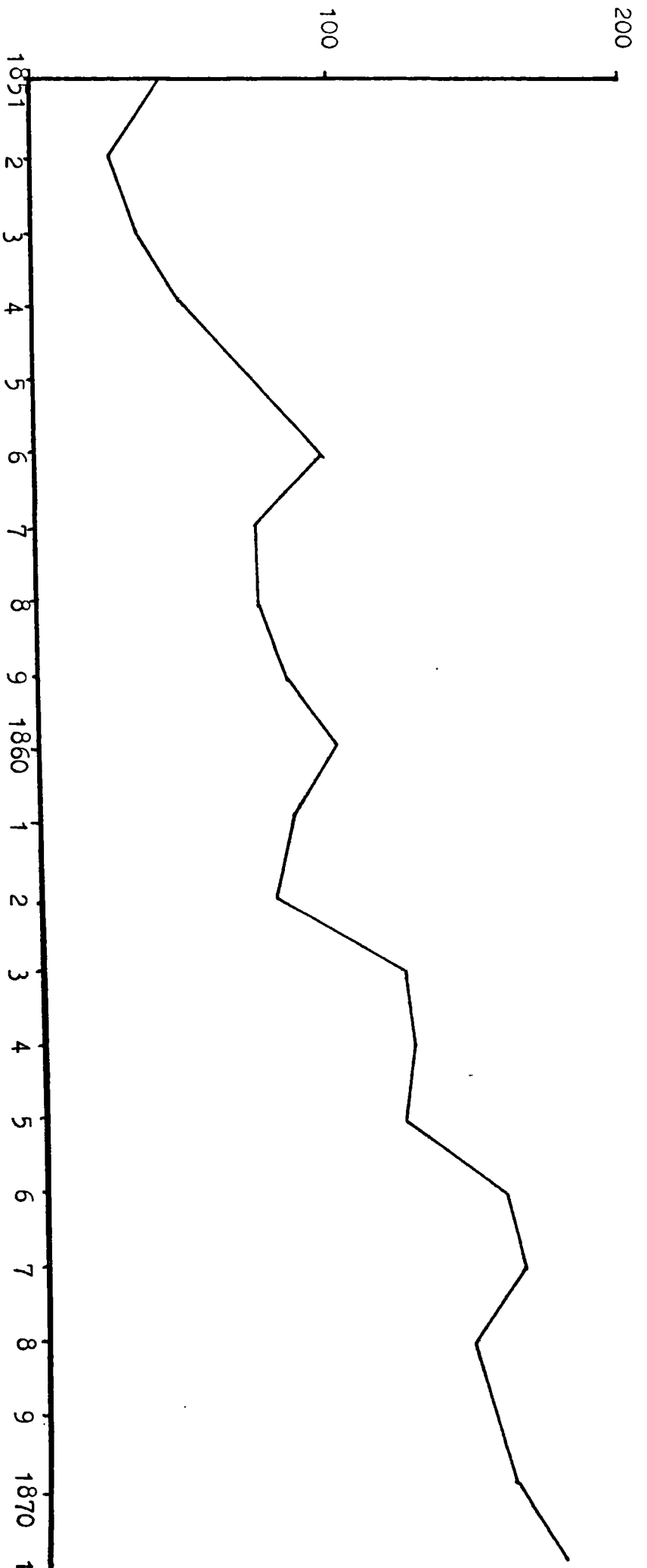
anger at such 'intimidation' of the workmen; it is possible that political activities were even discouraged, for when a clerk became a councillor in 1835 there was evidently some official disappointment that nothing could be done to prevent him<sup>1</sup>. Finally, plain snobbery should never be discounted, and the Yard officers after all had spent time with sawdust on their hands; when the Admiralty issued commissions to officers in the dockyard brigades, the United Services Gazette grumpily lamented that 'The parchments have been instrumental in making more "esquires" and "gentlemen" than the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo'<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>P.R.O. ADM 1/3436, 28 Dec. 1835.

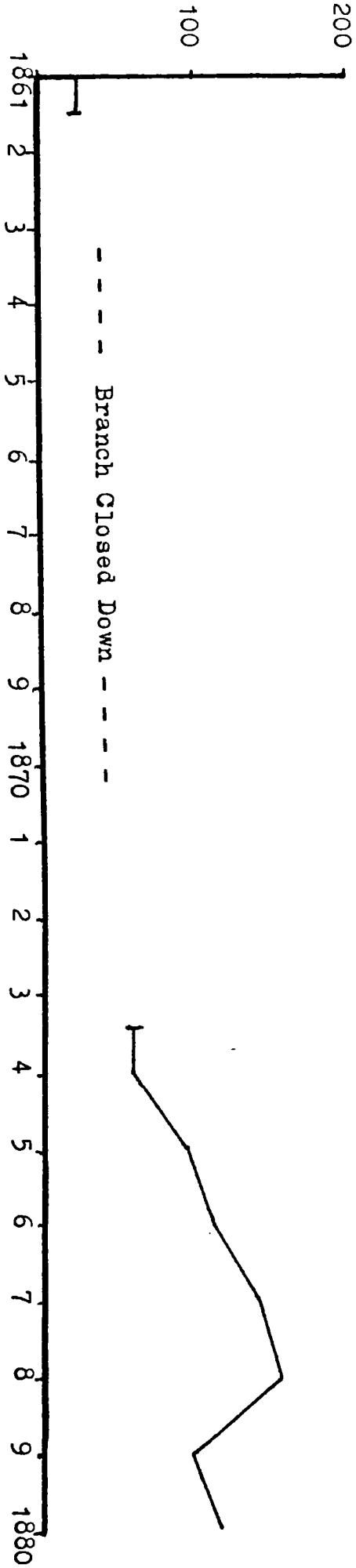
<sup>2</sup>H.T., 9 July 1849.

FIGURE TWO: REPORTED MEMBERSHIP OF THE A.S.E., 1851 - 1871, IN PORTSMOUTH.



Source: Amalgamated Society of Engineers, A.R.s, L.S.E. Library.

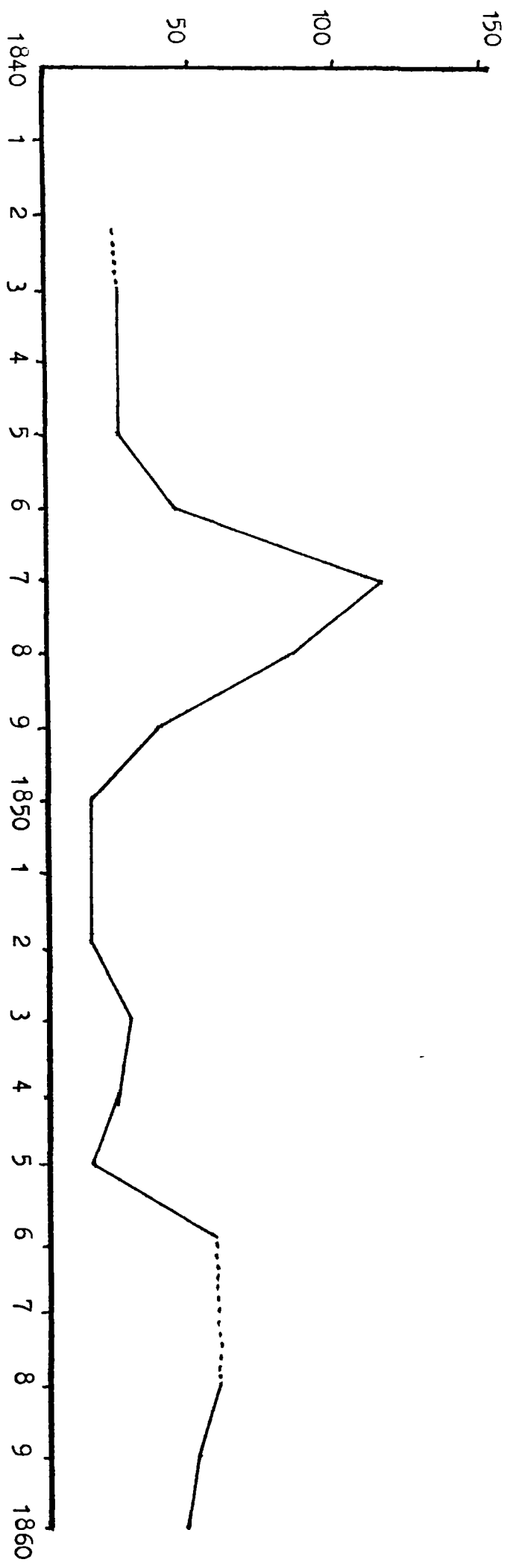
FIGURE THREE: REPORTED MEMBERSHIP OF THE O.B.S., 1861 - 1880, IN PORTSMOUTH.



Source: Operative Bricklayers' Society, A.R.s, M.R.C. Mss. 78.

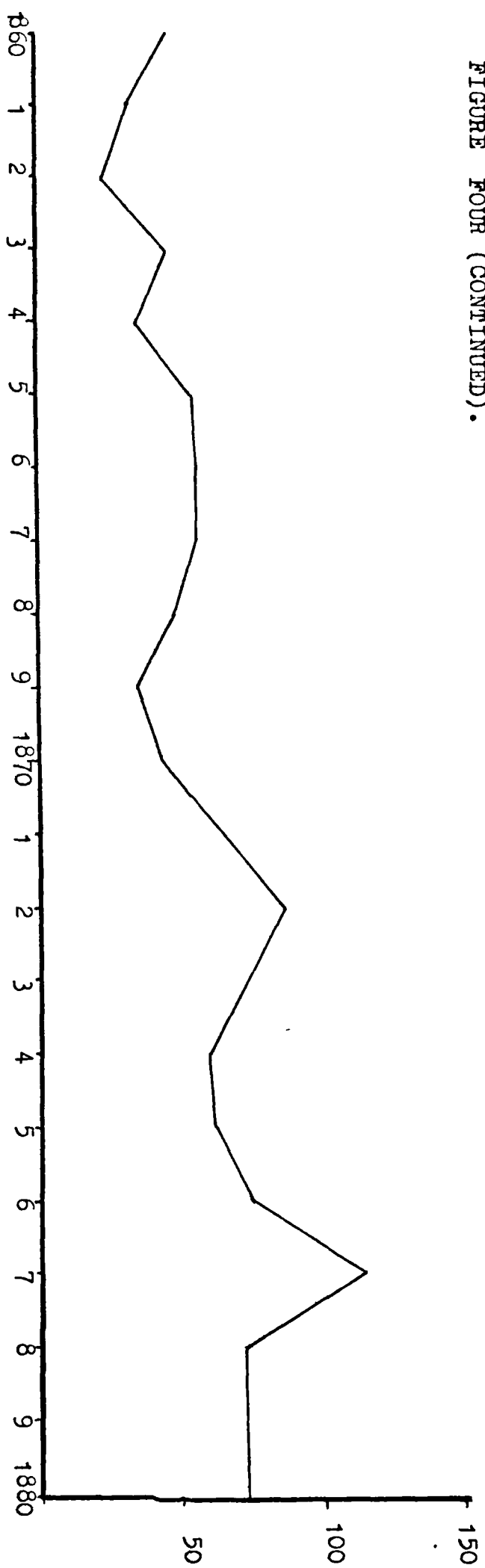


FIGURE FOUR: REPORTED MEMBERSHIP OF THE O.M.S., 1843 - 1880, IN PORTSMOUTH



Source: Operative Stone Masons' Society, A.R.s, M.R.C. Mss. 78; for 1858 - 60, from Rep. R.C. on Trade Unions, Parl. Papers 1868-69, xxxi, p. 313.

FIGURE FOUR (CONTINUED).



## CHAPTER VIII: TREATMENT OF THE POOR

The last chapter considered how working people related to local social leaders in their role of employees; the present examines the way that social leaders perceived and tried to deal with the problem of poverty. This is an area that has recently attracted a good deal of interest from historians, most notably Gareth Stedman Jones and Michael Rose<sup>1</sup>. Their studies have raised a number of questions: why was it that poverty was perceived as a problem? In what new ways was it seen as problematic? What were the 'real causes of poverty? How did official agencies of poor relief interact with informal ones? To what extent did relief agencies, official or voluntary, also act as agencies of social control? This chapter examines parallel questions in the context of nineteenth century Portsmouth. First, it looks at the underlying social conditions that gave rise to poverty, and asks how these conditions were perceived by contemporaries. Second,

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<sup>1</sup> Stedman Jones, Outcast London, cit.; D. Ward, 'The Deformation of the Gift: The Charity Organization Society in Leamington Spa', Warwick M.A., 1975; D. Fraser (ed.), The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century, 1976; M.E. Rose, The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914, 1972; R.J. Morris, The Voluntary Organizations of the Leeds Middle Class, 1830-1851, Oxford Ph.D, 1970; A. Brundage, 'The English Poor Law of 1834 and the Cohesion of Agricultural Society', Agricultural History, xlviii, 1974, pp. 405-17; J. Benson, 'Colliery Disaster Funds, 1860-1897', International Rev. of Social Hist. xix, 1974, pp. 79-83.

the various agencies which were advocated as a response to poverty (broadly, these were charity, self-help and the poor law) are studied, to see who might be affected by them, either as donors or as recipients. The results of this analysis are then used to suggest that the concept of 'social control', while it has played a useful role, has certain disabling limitations.

The town was noted for its poverty. Given the many different criteria being applied in different Poor Law Unions up and down the country, it would be hazardous to give any comparative statistical support for this contention. The poor rates were certainly high, but it has already been shown that this was partly the result of the government's refusal to pay rates on its industrial properties. The number of paupers at any one moment is an uncertain guide, because it could shift suddenly in any town at any time, thanks to seasonal, cyclical or other economic fluctuations. A glance at death rates, however, does suggest that Portsmouth's people were unusually prone to certain diseases. Portsmouth had the third worst smallpox rates in the country in mid-century (the most unfortunate were Plymouth and East Stonehouse, and Penzance). Smallpox was a particularly brutal visitor, but the town was also heavily hit by cholera and typhus. A relatively low level of deaths from various lung infections was due less to prosperity than to the absence of unhealthy and hazardous textile trades from the town (See Table 1 and Figure 1). It was not an especially healthy place, and it seems reasonable to infer from that fact that it was a relatively poor place.

Two characteristics of the local social structure combined to associate the local labour market with deep poverty. The first, and less important, was the rural poverty of the Wessex region, which made Portsmouth something of a magnet for unemployed agricultural workers. Both men and women entered the town from Hampshire, Dorset and West Sussex, hoping to find work; sometimes they were lucky, and found a place, for instance in the police; others were less fortunate, and resorted to crime, the poor law, or the armed forces. Which-ever was the case, rural migrants were one cause of the flooded labour market that permitted intense poverty to exist. But rural immigration as such paled into insignificance beside the much greater effect of the town's role as a garrison and port. Stedman Jones has noted that ex-servicemen were often difficult to employ<sup>1</sup>; but far more difficulty was

TABLE ONE: DEATHS FROM SMALLPOX, 1848-54. ANNUAL AVERAGE  
PER 100,000 POPULATION

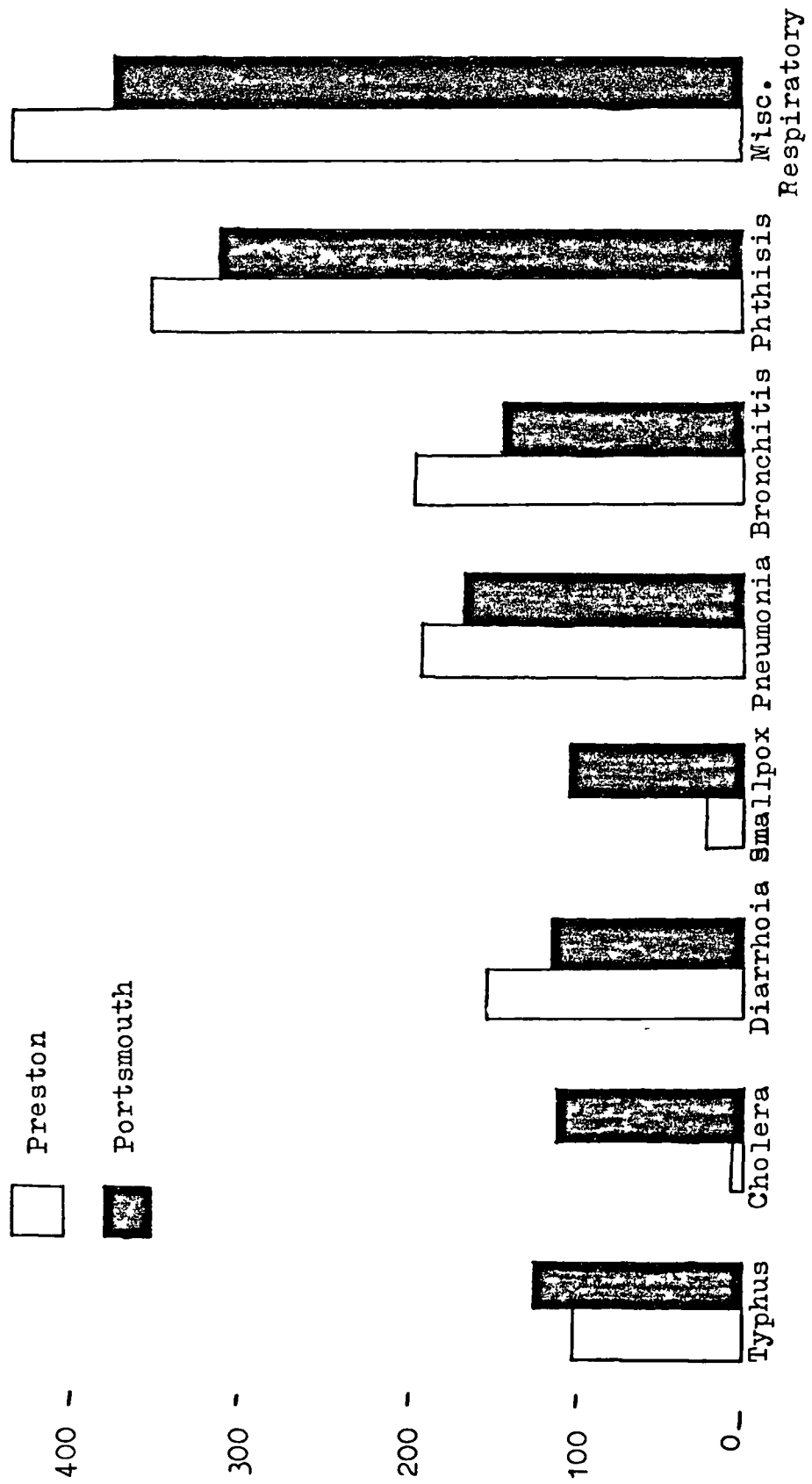
Registration District	Males	Females
Portsea Island	105	97
Bristol	80	63
Sheffield	73	78
Liverpool	45	37
Salford	21	19

Source: Papers Relating to the Sanitary State of the People of England, Parl. Papers 1857-58, xxiii, p. 267.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-9.

FIGURE ONE: DEATHS DUE TO SELECTED DISEASES IN PORTSMOUTH AND PRESTON, 1848-54:  
ANNUAL AVERAGE PER 100,000 POPULATION



Source: Parl. Papers 1857-58 xxiii, p. 468.

caused by the large number of single women - widows, wives, girlfriends, whores - that were brought into the town along with their menfolk, then left to fend for themselves while the men were away.

The dimensions of female poverty were troubling in themselves. According to the 1851 census, the town had 1,740 more married women than married men, as well as 3,160 widows. The army made no provisions whatsoever for its men to send part of their pay home to wives while serving overseas, and the Navy's scheme for seamen and marines was voluntary. Neither army nor Navy made any provision for widows and children of men killed in battle during this period<sup>1</sup>. Despite the frequent and lengthy absences of husbands, the ages of most servicemen and their wives meant that children were a permanent feature. Even if parish authorities wanted to, removal to the parish of origin was an expensive business. The women's capacity for earning was limited by the need to stay in the home. London master staymakers rushed into this cheap and plentiful labour market, as Mayhew recorded; yet the low pay, seasonality and uncertainty of the clothing trades meant that their main effect was to keep the women in the town and encourage the employment of child 'apprentices' without giving them enough to live on. The alternatives - prostitution, or some sort of crime - were even less attractive. A bout of unemployment, illness, burial, an

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<sup>1</sup>M.A. Lewis, op.cit., ch. xii; A.R. Skelley, The Terms and Conditions of Service of the Rank and File of the British Regular Home Army, 1856-1899, Edinburgh Ph.D., 1975, ch.v.

extra child, old age, or any of a number of possible disasters might mean that a family could no longer make ends meet at all.

Old age was a problem in itself for those who could not expect some sort of pension. There was a small superannuation allowance for seamen, graded on a macabre scale that allowed a few pence extra for a missing limb and so on. You had to have twentyone years' service before qualifying, and this in itself was rare in the early years under study, when seamen were discharged at the end of each commission. The army also required twentyone years' service before awarding a pension, although like the Navy it too could award discretionary disability pensions. Little wonder that a favourite music hall sketch depicted a Crimean veteran refused all but the workhouse<sup>1</sup>. To some extent the presence of the Dockyard mitigated the difficulties facing the ex-serviceman; there was a good deal of sympathy for the view that 'deserving' servicemen might find favourable treatment if they cared to apply to the Yards for work. Yet this effectively limited them to work in the less skilled trades, either as riggers or at best sailmakers, and most commonly as labourers. Moreover, most of these were seamen, not soldiers, who remained a problem<sup>2</sup>. By 1851 three groups of workers were likely to contribute disproportionately to the town's pauper population: farm labourers, often immigrants; servicemen, mostly from

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis, op.cit.; Skelley, op.cit., p. 325-7; Stedman Jones, 'Working class culture...', p. 494.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, 22 Mar. 1842; Parl. Papers 1847-48, xli, p.303; P.R.O. ADM 1/3440, 4 Oct. 1839, H.T., 1 July 1848.



the Navy; and clothing workers, especially shoemakers (see Table Two). Dockyard workers rarely ended up in the workhouse; the census manuscripts show that many elderly shipwrights were able to live independently upon their pensions, little as they were.

Poverty could arise as a consequence of the Yard's presence, despite the pension. Unskilled workers were, for a long time, not entitled to the superannuation allowance. While established men could look forward with confidence to steady employment, hired men - often again the unskilled - enjoyed no such certainty. Even established men could find themselves pressurized into quitting if the Admiralty decided to cut earnings, by reducing wages or hours or by demoting men to lower-paid positions. There was an allowance to the widows of men killed while at work in the Yard, but it could be refused if the Admiralty were not satisfied that the fatal injury was caused by the job itself. The widow of an Assistant Master Shipwright was refused a pension in 1822 after her husband had been killed when a dock gate burst open. The man had been thrown several feet by the inrush of water, and had burst his haemorrhoids on a piece of wood. The Admiralty's view was that it could not be expected to pay for a man's piles<sup>1</sup>. By attracting several thousand men to the town, the Yard also brought their wives onto the overstocked female labour market, since it employed no women at

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<sup>1</sup>P.R.O. ADM 106/1892, 13, 19, 30 Nov. 1822.

all (apart from a handful of flag stitchers).

We would, then, expect to find several distinct types of poverty. First, there were single parent families, in which the mother had the responsibility for supporting herself and the children. Secondly, and interlocked with the first, was the casual work, often domestic, of the clothing trades. Third was the problem of old age, or 'retirement' from one of the armed forces. These features of the Portsmouth labour market helped give rise to an area of poverty that was almost entirely separate from the world of regular male industrial or retail employment. It was largely this area that, together with vagrancy, came to be seen as the proper object of charity and the poor law. Regular employment (including self-employment) was the proper sphere of 'self help' in its various forms.

#### 1. The Treatment of Poverty Till the Thirties

To ask questions such as 'who contributed most towards the relief of poverty?' is almost metaphysical. Indeed, without its counterpart ('who contributed most towards the creation of poverty') it is almost meaningless. Even interpreted as a semi-quantitative question, it is so imprecise as to be unanswerable, for the definition of poverty is never unambiguous, and in nineteenth century Britain it involved numerous judgements, private and public, about oneself and others. Realising one was poor was not so simple and clear cut a question as some quantifiers might like to think; admitting it was another matter again. It might be that, even in terms

TABLE TWO: OCCUPATIONS OF ADULT MEN IN PORTSEA ISLAND  
WORKHOUSE, 1851

		Number	Per cent	Per cent under 51
Agriculture:	labourers	29		
	fishermen	2		
	gardener	1		
	TOTAL	32	22.4	31
Services:	seaman	28		
	soldier	1		
	TOTAL	29	20.3	31
Manufacture:	clothing	18		
	food	4		
	shipbuilder	3		
	woodworker	3		
	furniture	2		
	metal	4		
	brickmaker	1		
	blacking mkr	1		
	pipe maker	1		
	watchmaker	1		
	TOTAL	38	26.6	29
Building:	Carpenter	7		
	Bricklayer	7		
	Painter	1		
	Plasterer	1		
	TOTAL	16	11.2	19
Retail:	Drink	3		
	Food	2		
	Bookseller	1		
	Hawker	1		
	Marine stores	1		
	TOTAL	8	5.6	12
Transport:	Waterman	3		
	Coachman	1		
	TOTAL	4	2.8	25
Personal Service:	Servant	1		
	Hairdresser	2		
	Musician	1		
	TOTAL	4	2.8	50
General Labourer		7		
	TOTAL	7		
'Independent':	ship owner	1		
	shipping agent	1		
	coal merchant	1		
	TOTAL	3	2.1	0.0
None		2	2.8	100
TOTAL		143	100.0	31

Source: 50% sample drawn from PRO/H0107/1657.

of the amount of money that changed hands, the most important way of relieving charity was carried out by the working class within itself, in the form of help given to children or younger brothers or sisters to see them 'on their way in life', or of influence in obtaining apprenticeships, or of such comforts as a pint for a friend. Perhaps it is as well that these things escaped the Gradgrinds, and now escape the cliometricians, for in terms of public political symbolism, personal friendship did not count at all. What mattered most was the Poor Law.

Before the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act in most parts of Britain the parishes were responsible for administering the compulsory relief of the destitute. Portsmouth contained two parishes, of which Portsea was in the nineteenth century far the larger. The smaller, St Thomas's (roughly equivalent to modern Old Portsmouth), contained a prosperous business area along High Street, a port district around the Camber and along Point, and a poorer area around the barracks. The Vestry, with a paid assistant overseer, was dominated by the Tory group, in particular the Arnaud and Deacon families. The old, cramped workhouse was in the same street as the Colewort Barracks, side by side with brothels as well as a semi-derelict patch known as 'Oakum Bay', populated by tramps, thieves and prostitutes. The largest ratepayers in St Thomas's (excluding government property, much of which was not rated), were in High Street and Broad Street, where the leading commercial, professional and drink interests were located.

Sir Frederick Eden wrote in 1795 that 'Portsmouth, in order to reduce its Rates, is endeavouring to get incorporated with Portsea; the latter however is determined to oppose this measure'<sup>1</sup>. Portsea, although it too was fortified and garrisoned, was a very different town from its senior partner. During periods of war, it rang with the bustle of Yard and Navy; outside its gates lived increasing numbers of Dockyard workers at Landport, and 'urban gentry' at Southsea, as well as the inhabitants of the villages. The parish officers, in Eden's words, 'belong to the Dockyard, from whence they receive their wages, and are excused from working in consideration of their serving a parish office'. Unlike St Thomas's, Portsea kept the same officers year in and year out, and the Navy Board found that it was more trouble than it was worth to insist that they return to their tools<sup>2</sup>. The strength of the Dockyard workers lay in their numbers, enabling them to dominate the vestry. Although it was the magistrates who appointed overseers, in practice they chose candidates from a list supplied by the vestry, and seem to have been willing to defend the vestry's choice against pressure from the Navy Board.

This was the state of parish affairs when the peace ('dreaded here', said Eden<sup>3</sup>) returned. Initially the activity of Yard

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<sup>1</sup>The State of the Poor, 1795, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. D. Wilson, op.cit., p. 87. So far as I can discover, the Yard workers controlled Portsea Guildable, but not the Liberty: see Hants. Courier, 1 Apr. 1816.

<sup>3</sup>Eden, op.cit.

and town during the run-down of the Navy meant that poor law expenditure stayed steady. Only with the harsh reductions of 1817-20 did the poor law system come seriously under strain in Portsmouth. Poor law costs doubled in two years. The first victims were, of course, servicemen and their families and many dockyardmen, all of whom could find their livelihood gone overnight. Potential paupers, however, were also one-time customers of small shopkeepers, publicans and retailing craftsmen who found that their businesses were locked into unavoidable decline. The results can be seen in Figures Two and Three, and in Table Three below. The bulk of the unemployment fell in the parish of Portsea, which now

TABLE THREE: TOTAL EXPENDITURE OF PORTSMOUTH PARISHES UPON  
POOR RELIEF

	1815	1818
	£	£
St Thomas	3,439	4,897
Portsea	7,676	18,042

Source: Parl. Papers 1818, xix; Parl. Papers 1822, v.

became the victim of the exclusiveness that had marked relations between the two vestries: neither would accept a pauper from the other without a removal order, for instance<sup>1</sup>. Yet if Portsea was worst hit, St Thomas did not escape the slump: relief expenditure rose, and as well as the 'traditional' patterns of female and elderly poverty the workhouse

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

FIGURE TWO: ANNUAL EXPENDITURE UPON POOR RELIEF, PORTSEA ISLAND, 1813 - 1851

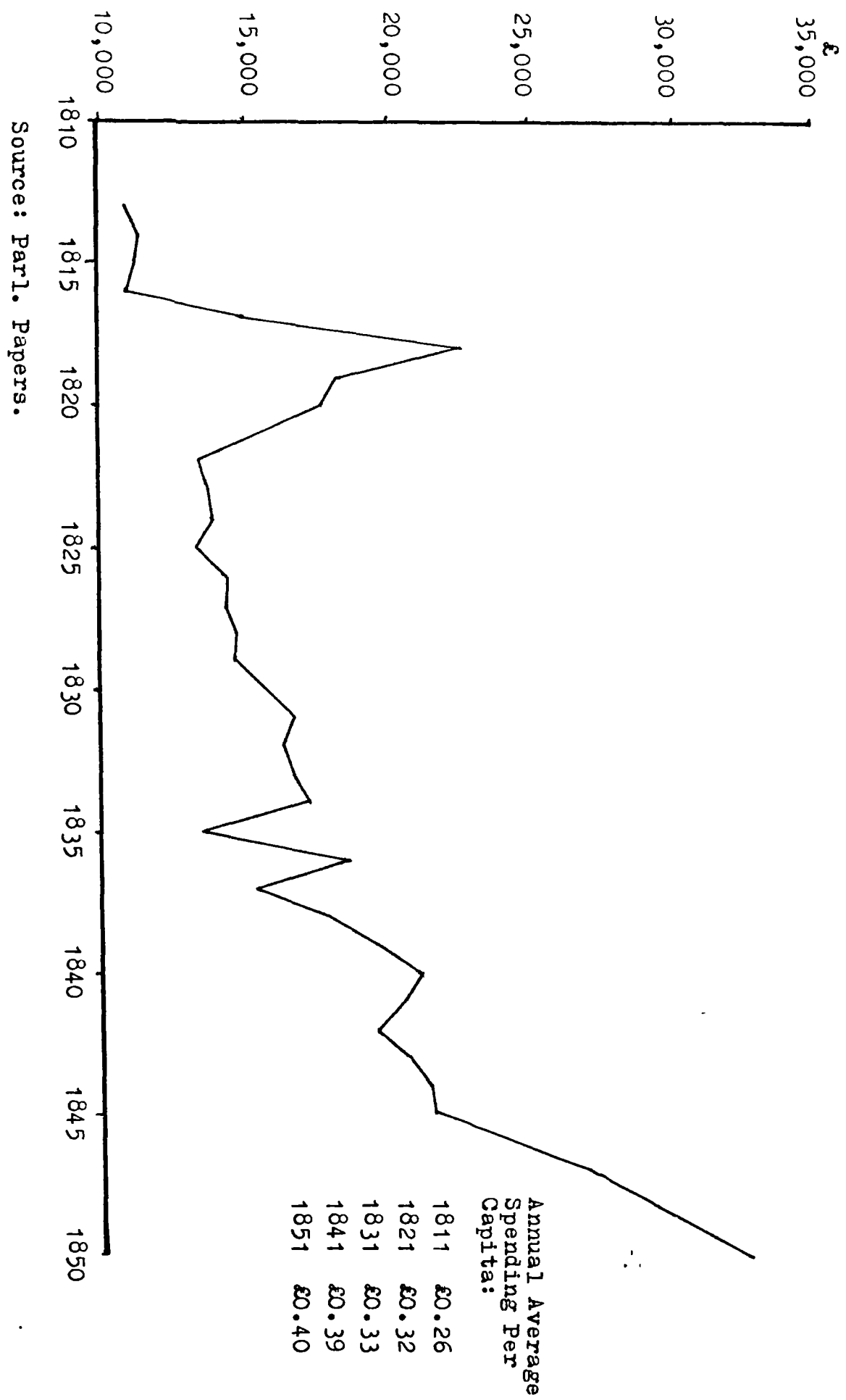
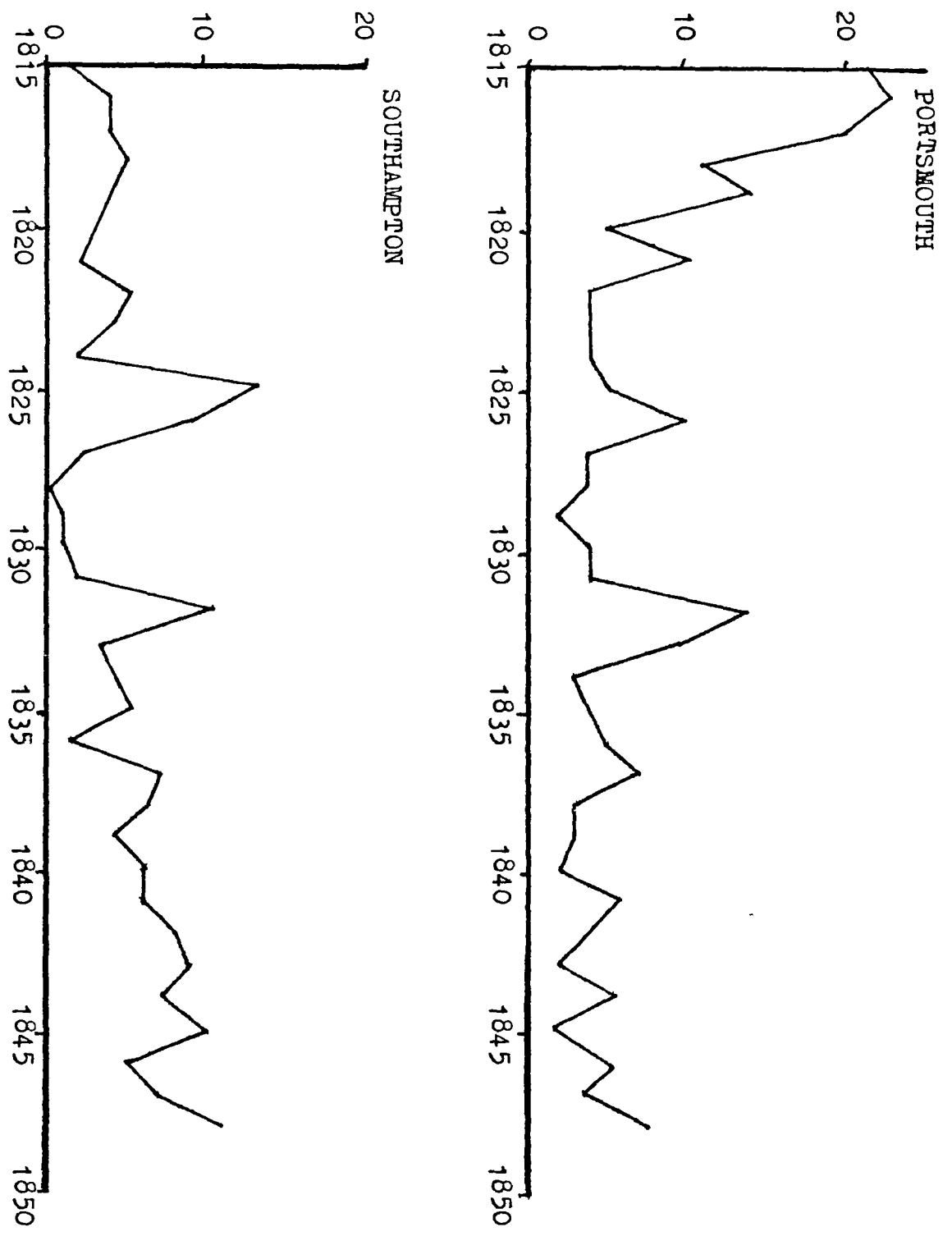


FIGURE THREE: REPORTED BANKRUPTCY CASES IN PORTSMOUTH AND SOUTHAMPTON, 1815 - 1840.



Source: Bankruptcy Dockets, P.R.O. B4/34 - 52.



now included a number of young men (one or two were described as 'black men', suggesting that they were ex-sailors). Young men were not likely to stay in the house more than a week or so, but permanent absolute poverty remained the lot of the women and the elderly (See Tables Four and Five). Women dominated the out-relief lists, accounting for 121 out of 179 claimants in January 1820, for example. The Portsea outdoor relief list included 1,860 children, compared with only 875 adults; another 900 people were confined in the house<sup>1</sup>.

While Portsmouth parish, less affected by the slump, experienced no radical change in its administration, Portsea saw the end of the dockyardmen's dominance. Drastic reductions in the size of the Yard workforce, and in the hours and wages of those who remained in work, meant that many of smaller propertyowners, previously entitled to vote in the vestry, were no longer able to pay their rates and could therefore no longer vote. Secondly, the inability of the dockyardmen to pay rates meant that a greater burden fell upon businessmen, themselves suffering from the loss of naval and military custom, at a time of rising poor relief expenditure. Third, the Yard was now more likely and better able to take action against men who had collected wages while carrying out parochial duties. The Corporation was not likely to risk its reputation among the small ratepaying businessmen for the sake of an alliance with Yardmen that seemed to have lost much of

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 26 Jan. 1818; E. Edwards, The Poor of Portsmouth and their Relief, 1820-1850, English Local History Diploma Dissertation, Portsmouth Poly, 1977, Appendices 2 and 6 (unpaginated).

TABLE FOUR: INMATES AGES, ST THOMAS'S WORKHOUSE, 1815-1817

(a) <u>Males</u>	%
0 - 20	48
21-50	36
51+	16
N=	108

(b) <u>Females</u>	%
0 - 20	51
21-50	45
50+	3
N=	144

Source: Lists of Poor in Portsmouth Workhouse, P.C.R.O.,  
PL 6/16

TABLE FIVE: DURATION OF STAY, ST THOMAS'S WORKHOUSE, 1815-17

(a) <u>Males, 21-50</u>	%
Died	11
Less than one month	22
one-three months	22
less than one year	11
remaining in house	33
N=	36

(b) <u>Females, 21-50</u>	%
Died	20
Less than a month	5
one-three months	38
less than one year	14
remaining in house	23
N=	65

Source: As for Table Four

its usefulness. Each feature of local political and economic life that had given the Yardmen their hold over the vestry was not lost.

The first response of the local business groups, however, seems to have been one of commiseration with the poor. The Telegraph was 'powerfully' affected by the 'distress which the change in the times has produced among the lower classes of Society, urging 'that some plan should be devised to furnish them with employment'.<sup>1</sup> A correspondent was not entirely happy with existing arrangements, yet was clearly thinking of events further afield than St Mary's vestry:

If the rich were to support the poor in idleness, all ranks would soon be levelled to pauperism; on the other hand, if they withhold relief, riots or revolutions may be the consequence.

He suggested that 'it were infinitely wiser to pay the poor man a shilling a day for erecting an unmeaning pyramid, than allow him to receive it as an eleemosynary donation'.<sup>2</sup> The enemy here was indiscriminate alms-giving by the gentry, rather than the vestry as such. More useful proposals emerged from a pamphlet, A View of the State of the Parish of Portsea, which urged the promotion of civilian trades, manufactures and husbandry<sup>3</sup>.

The vestry responded by appointing a committee of 24 rate-payers, who investigated the workhouse, suggested employing outdoor paupers as potters, spinners, knitters or road-

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<sup>1</sup>28 May 1816.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 2 Sept. 1816.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 9, 16 Dec. 1816.

builders and enquired into the list of exempted ratepayers. The committee referred to the 'unceasing attention, scrupulous integrity, and discriminating benevolence of the Churchwardens and Overseers', concluding that 'the affairs of the Parish are providently and honourably conducted'<sup>1</sup>. However, in 1817 the poor rate rose rapidly, and for many smaller traders the effect was crippling (see Figure Three on p.445). During the autumn, two Portsea traders published what they called A Correct Copy of the Rate Book of the Parish of Portsea, Taken the 5th of September, 1817. Criticisms of the parish officers, previously confined to handbills and (presumably) gossip, were stated systematically, publicly, and with a view to action. Accepting that 'all who possess hearts attuned to human sympathy' could not oppose the principle of a poor rate, the authors objected primarily to the assessment and administration of the Portsea rates. They criticised exemptions, which meant that 'the middling order of persons are compelled to pay more than their due share'. They attacked the officers, who refused to make public their accounts, and had held on to office 'so long...that they are become perpetual Pensioners on the Parish'. Then they went on to publish a full list of the ratepayers, noting the amounts paid by each, and occasionally making comments like 'Dennis Bevan, Shipwright - POOR!!!' or 'Norkett, fruiterer - excused!!!'

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<sup>1</sup>Hants Chronicle, 2, 16 Dec. 1816.

All those who were exempted were marked with an asterisk, those who paid only a portion were marked with a 'P'. Those marked as exempt included fourteen shipwrights, thirteen unidentified Yardmen, a caulker, a carpenter, a publican and a fruiterer, as well as many whose occupations were not given. Perhaps it is worth noting, incidentally, that the authors were not swept up by a frothy moral panic: one, James Beattie of the Ship and Castle on the Hard, was himself bankrupted in 1822<sup>1</sup>. The tradesmen took over the vestry in 1817, the Guildable parish overseers of that year including a yeoman and a master tailor. There seems to have been what one paper described as 'great local interest' in the vestry meeting of 1818, but once more the tradesmen won out. By 1833, the Poor Law Commissioners found that the officers were 'usually Tradesmen or persons engaged in business, for the town part, and Yeomen for the county or rural part'<sup>2</sup>.

St Thomas's parish had been run by businessmen before the slump, and it continued to be dominated by much the same men: the Arnauds and Deacons, together with some apprentice Liberals (Edward Casher, Henry Hollingsworth, Andrew Nance)<sup>3</sup>, and one or two members of the Whig oligarchy (Erasmus Jackson)<sup>4</sup>. The relatively small size of the parish meant

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<sup>1</sup>J. Emery and J. Beattie, Correct Copy of the Rate Book, Portsea, 1817; P.C.L.: Court of Bankruptcy, Docket Book, P.R.O. B4/37. Beattie had gone to the Quarter Sessions to challenge the rate in 1817: Hants Chronicle, 13 Oct. 1817; cf. complaints in the H.T., 28 Apr. 1817.

<sup>2</sup>Hants. Chronicle, 30 Mar. 1818; Parl. Papers 1834, xxviii, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup>Hants. Courier, 3 Apr. 1815; H.T., 17 July 1815.

<sup>4</sup>Hants. Courier, 8 Apr. 1816.

that there was more flexibility over relief, particularly since its resources were more extensive than those of Portsea. Paupers were made to attend the Old Town Hall, so that rate-payers could confront 'any who may improperly make application' for outdoor relief<sup>1</sup> - something that could only be done in a relatively compact community. The destitute were employed on street-cleaning, borrowing equipment from the Ordnance; this seems to have continued into the 1820s<sup>2</sup>. As in Portsea the poorer parishioners were unable to pay their rates, so that the amount collected per rate fell by two-fifths in two years. In 1817 one half of the houses was too poor to be assessed<sup>3</sup>. Yet St Thomas's was in the first place more accustomed to a degree of permanent poverty, and in the second it contained enough affluent citizens to be able to pass through the slump without any great upheaval in vestry personnel (who anyway tended to change yearly, unlike Portsea's).

The change in personnel in Portsea Vestry led to equivalent changes in the policies pursued. There was a new emphasis on keeping regular accounts, and two overseers appeared in court, in 1819 and 1821, for trying to cheat the parish. After the 1817 vestry elections it was revealed that the parish was over £4,000 in debt; after an investigation of the

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 5 May 1817, 15 June 1819.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 20 Jan. 1817; Minutes, Portsmouth Improvement Commission, P.C.R.O. G/ICQ 1/3, 30 Dec. 1816, 13 Jan. 1817, 28 Feb. 1820, 14 Oct. 1822, and possibly 1 Feb. 1830.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 4 Aug. 1817.

assessment list, rates were demanded from a number of properties hitherto exempted. Lists of outdoor paupers were hung on the church doors for the perusal of dissatisfied parishioners, and in January 1818 the list was published. Claimants had to ask four ratepayers to sign a statement supporting the claim, relief in money was replaced where possible with relief in kind, and in 1820 three paid assistant overseers (receiving a percentage on rates) were appointed<sup>1</sup>. Expenditure upon relief *fell from a peak of* £18,000 in 1818 to £11,700 in 1821, to the satisfaction of many parishioners, although undoubtedly due to extraneous economic circumstances rather than the parish's attempts to economize. The personnel was established by the 1817-18 victory of the small businessmen; later attempts to impose a Select Vestry or a Board of Guardians (both of which would have meant parish government by the very wealthiest property owners) were successfully resisted by the Portsea vestry. No doubt the parish was helped by the Borough magistrates' lack of enthusiasm for a select vestry, although the county justices threw their weight in favour of the reform<sup>2</sup>. The vestry remained under small trader control, its overseers being tailors, drapers, bakers, and master builders, with the occasional farmer from the rural areas.

The poor law represented a formal, legislative and representative method of dealing with perceived problems of poverty.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 29 Sept., 24 Nov. 1817, 26 Jan., 23 Nov. 1818, 3 Apr. 1820.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 31 Mar., 27 Oct. 1817, 12 Jan. 1818.

The town's leading citizens, such as the Bonham Carters or the Dockyard Superintendent, Sir George Grey, never participated in an area which would have involved them in acrimonious disputes and have seen very little return. Only Daniel Howard, the one-time Jacobin, seems to have involved himself in parochial affairs, being engaged in the campaign to reform Portsea after the peace. The town's elites were however, engaged in charitable activity, which presumably (because it was entirely voluntary) carried more status than cavilling over the rates. The Portsea town meeting held in December 1816 to raise funds for the poor was called after thirty leading inhabitants had petitioned the Mayor, including Howard, Sir George Grey, Sir Samuel Spicer, and several of the clergy; the earliest subscribers included Edward Carter (£21), Grey (£50), Thomas Bonham (£21) and a cluster of clergymen. A similar meeting was held in St Thomas's, attracting subscriptions from the Rev. C.B. Henville (£21), Edward Carter (£15 15s), Thomas Bonham (£15 15s), and various other leading citizens. In Portsea at least, two of the older aspects of charitable giving came under challenge: the voluntary principle, and the open-handed approach, were ruled out when Howard and Grey proposed that the Relief Committee should investigate the extent of 'real' need so as to confine relief to its "proper objects", and call upon the wealthy to solicit subscriptions. Both innovations, particularly the second, aroused opposition; but the motion was agreed, and cheap food and fuel were distributed through the winter and into the late spring of the next year. Town meetings were held in the following years; they continued to



raise considerable sums, but strictly as ad hoc responses to an immediate need<sup>1</sup>.

Permanent charities could also call upon the affluent and respectable as patrons. Some almost belonged to one or two individuals, such as the Dorcas Society, founded by the wives of the Lieutenant Governor and the Resident Commissioner. It was said that Lady Grey and Mrs General Williams 'personally superintend it in all its minute detail', subjecting applicants to 'such a scrutiny...that the intention of its benevolent supporters (to clothe the comparatively naked) is sure to be accomplished'<sup>2</sup>. Such close personal control by the patrons was at least partly dysfunctional, since it meant that death or removal of a central supporter could disable the charity. The more successful permanent organizations may have been less effective at restoring the personal touch to relationships between rich and poor, but at least they survived the strains of the slump. The Ladies' Benevolent Society, for instance, formed under the patronage of King George and Lady Grey in 1807, continued to operate through the 1830s, although weakened by the departure of Lady Grey<sup>3</sup>. Despite difficulty, other charities managed to keep working, such as the Portsea Compassionate Society, connected with St John's chapel and aimed at the old or sick; the local Visiting Society, although

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<sup>1</sup>Based on H.T. 23, 30 Dec. 1816, 5 May 1817.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 25 Nov. 1816, 20 Dec. 1819.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. H.T., 28 Feb. 1831; the Corporation used the L.B.S. to channel its own charitable donations: Letter Book, 27 Jan. 1823. The last reference to the society that I have seen is its Annual Report, 1836, P.C.L.

concerned mainly with evangelising the poor, also offered relief; the Strangers' Friend Society had a policy of relieving travellers<sup>1</sup>. There was also a small group of medical charities, including at one end individual doctors offering free treatment to the 'respectable' poor, and at the other end an elite body such as the General Dispensary, patronized by Grey, and including among its officers Daniel Howard, the Rev. C.B. Henville, Jane Austen's brother Frances, Erasmus Jackson, and a couple of Yard officers, Simon Goodrich the Mechanist and John Alcot, the Storekeeper. The Treasurer was George Grant<sup>2</sup>. The two Yard officers were not politically active (both signed the 1820 loyal declaration, but as government officials this was probably expected of them); the bulk of the charities' leaders were members of the Whig group or its allies, governing the town by other means than politics. This role seems to have been assumed comfortably by the Whigs even in private life; Edward Carter's obituary praised his willingness to respond to individuals such as Pounds' children who needed help. The formal charities, where public leadership was involved, were more likely to attract part of the Whig leadership, while private individual and 'unorganized' charity was at least as likely, perhaps more so, to attract gentry or Tories. Joseph Webb, a

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Reps. Portsea Compassionate Society, P.C.L., LP. Rep. Portsmouth District Visiting Society, 1832, P.C.R.O., CHU/2; H.T., 20 Dec. 1819.

<sup>2</sup>A.R., June 1827, P.C.L., LP; H.T., 11 Mar. 1822.

TABLE SIX: NUMBERS RELIEVED BY THE LADIES' BENEVOLENT  
SOCIETY, 1814-1835

1814	1,830
1815	1,351
1816	2,200 (estimate)
1817	2,000
1818	1,186
1819	?
1820	?
1821	797
1822	800
1823	?
1824	?
1825	?
1826	578
1827	545
1828	557
1829	664
1830	?
1831	?
1832	470
1833	?
1834	?
1835	416

Source: Hants. Telegraph, passim; A.R., 1836, P.C.L.

Southsea farmer and landowner, used to roast an ox or two for the local poor every Christmas. The officers of the 28th Regiment gave up a day's pay, and encouraged their men to do the same, for the Gosport poor in 1816. Widows from

an 1822 shipwreck were helped by (among others) Elias Arnaud, John Lindegren, Samuel Garrett, and other local inhabitants (not all, by any means, Tories)<sup>1</sup>. The picture, then, is one of widespread giving, but leadership by the existing political elite.

If it is difficult to penetrate the world of private charity, it is almost impossible to find much out about working class self-help. Formal, public organizations left the best records, although these are often fragmentary and misleading, as we have seen in the case of the Dockyardmens' co-op. Most publicity was given when upper class sponsors were involved, as in the Savings Bank which was established in 1816 to look after the 'small Savings of the industrious lower Classes, Servants, Labourers &c.' C.B. Henville was one of those associated with this venture. It seems to have attracted a reasonable number of deposits, although it is not known who was involved: in its first year, 161 people had saved an average of £7 6s; in its second, 252 had an average of £8 1s each. Possibly the Bank had the same type of depositor as others elsewhere: domestic servants, shopkeepers, and friendly societies<sup>2</sup>.

In part, the Savings Bank was founded to attract working men away from existing friendly societies, surely working class institutions per excellence. Eden was mightily impressed by the number in the area (six with 80 to 180 members apiece,

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 1 Jan., 16 Dec. 1816, 11 Mar. 1822.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 6 Nov., 25 Dec. 1815; M. Anderson, Family Structure, p. 32; P.H.J.H. Gosden, Self-Help: Voluntary Associations in the Nineteenth Century, 1973, pp. 218, 229.

he thought); by 1815-20 there were many more than in the 1790s, and evidence of existence survives of eleven. Best established was the Beneficial Society, which had a large number of skilled workers and small tradesmen among its membership, patronized by several dozen 'Honorary Members'. That the Beneficial Society kept a school in Portsea, as well as providing friendly benefits for its ordinary members, made it doubly respectable; its annual dinners were always chaired by the Mayor, and attended by local political leaders (often including the two M.P.s); such occasions were very much rituals, expressing gratitude and giving the guest speakers an opportunity to refer to the wonderful social cohesion created by such associations<sup>1</sup>. Such patronage was less often to be found among lesser friendly societies. The Provident and Humane Society was helped by a local Tory solicitor when it wanted to rewrite its rules after an unfortunate fraud by its officers; the Annuitant Society was established by Tory leaders and Liberal gentry including William Deacon and John Burrill; the Union Pension Society had a stack of honorary patrons, including three Carters, Sir Samuel Spicer, Sir George Grey, Sir George Cockburn, and a pair of Grants<sup>2</sup>. Others lacked patronage entirely, coming to light only because of some semi-accidental brush with the affluent, such as the Dockyard Joiners' Club, which successfully sued an official before the Borough Justices<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H. Slight, The History of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, 1838, p. 11; Proceedings, P.C.R.O.

<sup>2</sup>Records, in P.C.L.; H.T., 8 Jan. 1816.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 10 Sept., 29 Oct. 1825.

The search for respectable patrons may have been promoted by post-war conditions, when the collapse of local businesses and the Godwin Banks increased doubts about viability. Trustees became of growing importance, and the Union Pension Society found them among the Carter group: there was no better way of winning over the J.P.s than by making them officers! The Society's first meeting was attended by 'tradesmen, officers in the Government Departments, heads of Religious Congregations, and public teachers'. Its early members included Yardmen, as well as others: deaths reported included an oyster catcher, a Point publican, and a retired foreman at the Victualling Yard's mill<sup>1</sup>. Yet the members did not behave in the way that the patrons must have expected: many dropped out, while the average age of the remainder shot beyond the level of financial viability (Table Seven). The attitude of some of those who dropped out is illustrated by the case of one U.P.S. member who ran up five months' arrears

TABLE SEVEN: UNION PENSION SOCIETY, 1817-1832

	Membership	Widows being relieved	Orphans
1817-18	2,137	13	1
1821-22	1,427	85	6
1829-30	873	202	10
1832-33	607	229	16

Source: Annual Reports, P.C.L.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 7, 14 Apr., 24 Nov. 1817.

of dues; then paid the entire backlog at six o'clock on a Sunday morning - four hours after the death of his wife. Organizational and reputational difficulties remained<sup>1</sup>. Nor is there any evidence that those members who remained absorbed the values that patrons hoped the Society would propagate. This is not to say that there were no such members, but rather to draw attention to the function of activities like these of maintaining the patrons' image of themselves as benevolent, enlightened social leaders.

Other forms of self-help existed, often only hinted at in the records. There were 'box clubs' for widows and orphans of Dockyardmen, reported the Telegraph in 1819 when Grand Duke Maximilian of Austria discovered one and put £17 in it. Less pleasant were responses like abortion or infanticide, of which about one case was reported every year; one supposes that 'laying over' unwanted infants was as common in Portsmouth as elsewhere<sup>2</sup>. It is nice to discover elements of mutuality even in one of these sad affairs: one Harvey, a caulker, on his way home from the Yard in 1816 found a newborn baby on the roadside; rather than see it go into the workhouse, he took it into his own family<sup>3</sup>. Isolated instances such as this suggest a deeper pattern of self-help among the poorer inhabitants, no doubt limited in extent as well as discriminating in a much more severe fashion than

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<sup>1</sup>A.R., 1829, P.C.L.; H.T., 19 Feb., 19 Mar. 1821, 14 Jan. 1822.

<sup>2</sup>E.g. H.T., 9 July, 8 Aug., 1818; 19 May, 21 July 1817; W.L. Langer, 'Infanticide: a Historical Survey', History of Childhood Quarterly, i, 1974, pp. 353-65. Benjamin Disraeli refers to a 'sick box' in the Traffords' factory in Sybil, or the Two Nations, 1845, Book iii, ch. 9.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 22 Apr. 1816.

anything the C.O.S. might cook up.

Politically, the most important way of approaching poverty was through the poor law. It offered leadership to those who were excluded from leading voluntary activity by cause of their inability to pay large, regular subscriptions, and were cut off from the Whig elite in the closed Corporation. Small traders, petty producers, and Dockyardmen could all take part in the vestry, and could there exert some control over the way that the community was being run. The largest and even many of the small formal charities were dominated by men, and often women, who had the time and money to spend on them. The affluent and powerful could also exert some influence over the friendly societies, limited by the fact that they were set up by 'the industrious classes' to meet certain, specified ends. What the elites brought to the charities and friendly societies was their wealth and their prestige; what the charities did in return was to increase the power of those elites over those who were so needy as to require assistance, although it is doubtful how much long-term impact this might have; the friendly societies remained overwhelmingly popular institutions, largely self-controlled and self-financed.

## 2. The Eighteen-thirties to the 'Sixties

The campaign against the New Poor Law in the northern counties has been intensively studied, largely because of its seminal contribution to Chartism<sup>1</sup>. Although some of the same

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. M.E. Rose, 'The Anti-Poor Law Agitation', in J.T. Ward (ed.), Popular Movements, 1830-1850, 1970, pp. 78-94; 'The New Poor Law in an Industrial Area', in R.M. Hartwell (ed), The Industrial Revolution, Oxford, 1970, pp.121-43; it was not implemented in Oldham until 1847 - Foster, op.cit., pp. 63-4.



political features can be seen in the south, on the whole rural communities accepted the Act, while towns tried to wriggle out of it: it was not implemented in Southampton until the 1850s, for example<sup>1</sup>. All Portsmouth and Gosport parishes opposed union, although according to the local Poor Law Commission investigator 'the gentlemen...admitted the advantage'. Portsea vestry argued that the Swing riots had shown the need for the act to be implemented in the countryside, but felt that in 'extensive parishes...the Overseers cannot possess the local knowledge of the means and habits of the Poor'. St Thomas's were simply opposed, giving no reasons whatever<sup>2</sup>. The possibility of a Union was regarded with suspicion by town meetings in 1836. William Lang at the Old Town Hall declared himself sympathetic to the Act's principles, but hostile to any union with Portsea, and was supported by the audience; Portsea on the other hand favoured union with St Thomas's, but not with Gosport. The Assistant Commissioner decided to push ahead with a Portsea Island Union, but to leave Gosport on its own until attitudes softened<sup>3</sup>. A petition from the old township against the Union shows few of the poor (only three of the 421 signatories used a mark) and a number of the wealthy, including the Grants and T.E. Owen; it seems that a number of the poorer inhabitants had the idea that the aim of the Act was

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<sup>1</sup>A.T. Patterson, op.cit., vol.2, pp. 96-100; T. Kemnitz, op.cit., ch. iv.

<sup>2</sup>Parl. Papers, 1834, xxxv, p. 209; cf. A. Brundage, op.cit.; William Grant felt that Swing was a result of the failure to use a labour test: P.R.O. MH 12/10916, 20 Nov. 1834.

<sup>3</sup>Despite later attempts to revive the question, Gosport never did join the Portsea Island Union.

to raise the poor rates so that 'the Poor can be made comfortable'<sup>1</sup>. The petition did not, however, win support from the Whigs; although over two-thirds of the ratepayers did sign, the Carters did not.

Voting for the new Board of Guardians took place in the excitement of party politics and great hostility to the Act. Property was given its due weight in the electoral qualifications, with multiple voting permitted for the largest owners and occupiers, and a minimum qualification for candidates (property rated at £25 or more)<sup>2</sup>. There were twentyone places in all, fourteen for Portsea parish, so that in terms of population St Thomas's had roughly double the number of representatives it ought to have had. In consequence, large property owners could outvote small ones; and instead of responsibility to an open vestry (and both parishes do seem to have been genuinely accountable to their ratepayers, or at least to the active minority) Guardians could meet in private, were elected by ballot, and publicised decisions through the press (which they at times tried to manipulate).

Considerable difficulties faced the new Board from the outset. Six of the St. Thomas's Guardians, all prominent citizens,

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<sup>1</sup>So, at least, wrote one anonymous informant to the P.L.C., who was cross at the efforts of 'out & out Radical Price' and others against the Act. This letter and the petition are in MH 12/10916, 24 May, 18 June 1836.

<sup>2</sup>Details can be found in A. Brundage's useful study, 'Reform of the Poor Law Electoral System, 1834-94', Albion, vii, 1975, pp. 201-3; P.R.O. MH 12/10916, 18 May 1836.

refused to serve, leaving William Lang the radical as sole representative until six more could be elected. The Portsea Guardians, although they included some Liberals (Capt. Travers and Erasmus Jackson), were predominantly Tory; these included the Revd. Edmund Dewdney, the curate of St John's chapel, who became the first chairman, as well as the Pratt brothers, grocers and pastrybakers. By mid 1837, the Assistant Commissioner was complaining to London that the Guardians were 'not only opposed to his views, but to the New Poor Law generally', adding a catalogue of grouses (for instance that the paupers were too leniently treated, while the Board refused to even consider a Union workhouse or a Union chaplain)<sup>1</sup>. In March 1838 the Liberals, led by Capt. Travers, won a majority of places upon the Board; Dewdney was ousted, and his policy of non-cooperation with the Act was partially reversed, leaving the angry curate to write to the Times and Morning Herald<sup>2</sup>. Led by William Atfield, the Tories set up an Anti-Poor Law Association, denouncing the new Act as 'anti-social, unjust, unconstitutional, and unchristian'<sup>3</sup>; Atfield himself had been elected to the Board in March 1838, and although Dewdney failed to win back his seat until 1845, John Friend Pratt, another Tory, was usually returned at the top of the poll and sat at the Board

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<sup>1</sup>In Portsea 93 candidates entered the contest, and some 3,000 voters handed in their ballot sheets. MH 12/10916, 19, 21 July, 20 Oct., 1836, 9 Feb., 12 June 1837.

<sup>2</sup>There was another pamphlet war: J.O. Travers, Proceedings of the Board of Guardians of the Portsea Island Union, Portsea, 1838; H.T., 3 Apr., 12 June, 17 July, 18, 25 Dec. 1837, 19 Mar., 2 Apr. 1838; Times, 11 Dec. 1837, 15 Jan., 13 Mar., 21 Aug., 18 Sept. 1838, 18 May 1839.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 18 June 1838.

until 1868.

One difficulty that plagued the Guardians for a number of years was the tangled relationship with Portsea parish. Portsea, the parish with fewer wealthy inhabitants, had the worst areas of poverty, and until 1865 it was normal for each parish to pay its own separate bill for its own poor<sup>1</sup>. It continued to be common for the poor to be excused their rates, and it was indeed thought that threats of exclusive trading supported this practice<sup>2</sup>. In 1837 3,600 houses paid rates, while 4,300 did not; the parish was £2,100 in debt, and there was a feeling that the exemptions allowed by the overseers were illegal<sup>3</sup>. By 1842, Portsea rates were regularly falling short of the sums demanded by the Guardians, and underweight specie was being used for the payments that were made<sup>4</sup>. The parish continued to regard the collectors as its own employees rather than the Guardians', until the issue was settled by Parliament<sup>5</sup>.

The Board continued to resist a number of the Act's principles. Like many urban Unions, Portsea Island continued to give outdoor relief to the able bodied. In 1838 it paid cash to men driven out of work by 'the severe and inclement

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<sup>1</sup>M.E. Rose, The Relief of Poverty, p. 36; D. Ashworth, 'The Urban Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.), op.cit., p.143.

<sup>2</sup>In St Thomas, on the other hand, the overseers were keen to prosecute defaulters, and were only prevented by the Justices - that is, by the Carter group: MH 12/10916, 7 Nov. 1838.

<sup>3</sup>Guardians' Minutes, P.C.R.O. 193 A/1/1/1/1, 7 Dec. 1838.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1 Dec. 1841; 5 Jan. 1842; P.R.O., MH 12/10916, 5 June 1842.

<sup>5</sup>Guardians' Minutes, 10, 15, 19 July 1839.

state of the weather', although a labour test was supposedly operating. A parliamentary return of 1857 showed that 146 able-bodied men received outdoor relief on the 1st of July of that year, and in 1867 the Poor Law Board sanctioned the giving of outdoor relief to 110 men thrown out of work by the Dockyard reductions<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, there was persistent resistance to any workhouse being built for the two parishes. The existing houses were being used, with older inmates at St Thomas's and the insane, sick and able-bodied at Portsea. The Assistant Commissioner was deeply shocked by conditions in the Portsea house, in particular by the 'intercourse of the young girls with the many profligate able bodied women', the keeping of rabbits, smoking and drinking by paupers, and the stream of dissenting ministers that poured through the house<sup>2</sup>. The Guardians discussed this report, and decided (to the alarm of the Assistant Commissioner) to hold a public meeting on the matter. The meeting carried a resolution refusing to build a workhouse, proposed by William Lang and carried by roughly 800 votes to one, then deciding that all correspondence between Guardians and London on the matter should be made public<sup>3</sup>. A report by W.H. Garrington, one of the Union's medical officers, in 1842 did rather more to shift the views of the Guardians, who bought a 23-acre site at Deadman's Lane in Fratton.

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<sup>1</sup>MH 12/10916, 24 Jan., 6 Feb. 1838; Parl. Papers 1857, Sess. 2, xxxii, p. 485; H.T., 19 Jan., 16 Feb. 1867.

<sup>2</sup>MH 12/10916, 12 July 1837.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6 Aug. 1838; Guardians' Minutes, 23 July, 8 Aug. 1838; Times, 21 Aug. 1838.

The Guardian's motives in refusing to build a new house were less humanitarian than financial. As usual, the rate was a fierce issue in the town, and according to a report of 1841 a new workhouse would have involved the Union in a debt that would have taken twenty years to pay off. Garrington's report marked a slight shift in attitudes, with its insistence upon the rights of the young, the insane and the infirm. Moreover 1842 saw a reappearance of the dreaded cholera, and it was this more than any desire to implement the workhouse test that impelled the Guardians to give way to Somerset House.

The Guardians were involved in disputes both with the parish authorities and with London. They also had frequent difficulties with their own employees, and in particular with the medical officers who did not see why they should be pushed around by a committee of shopkeepers. Friction between medical officers and Guardians was partly one over status: despite their official position, the Guardians were often men of a lower social standing than that to which medical men allocated themselves. Particularly when an issue of medical expertise was at issue, the medical men could stand up in opposition to the Guardians. In these circumstances, the division among the authorities might work in the interests of the poor, as when Dr Carter was asked to be more sparing in his prescriptions of wine, porter and quinine; he refused even to spend his time discussing the matter with the Board, sending a letter that the Guardians thought 'so unbecoming'

that they despatched it to London<sup>1</sup>. There was a heated exchange between the Board and an M.O. who had diagnosed 'starvation' as the cause of death of a pauper<sup>2</sup>. There was a history of difficulty with William H. Garrington, a councillor and House Surgeon; he had asked for a rise in his salary in 1844 and been refused, so his irritation is understandable when in 1852 the Board decided to reduce his salary by forty pounds, after the P.L.B. had insisted that Portsea Island appoint an extra M.O. In this case the P.L.B. refused to sanction the salary cut, but Garrington resigned anyway in 1854<sup>3</sup>. Nor were the doctors the only employees who transgressed the Guardians' expectations<sup>4</sup>.

One reason that the Guardians were prone to insist on obedience from their employees, to the point of open conflict, lies in their own view of themselves and the way their self-image contrasted with their actual social position. The great majority of Guardians were small businessmen, often concerned to keep down rates above all else. They regarded themselves as patrons towards the paupers, who were expected in turn to be polite, deferential and grateful to the Guardians: one pregnant woman whose husband was in London was refused

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<sup>1</sup>Guardians' Minutes, P.C.R.O. 193 A/1/1/19 and 10, 2 June 1869, 6, 20 Apr., 4 May, 1 June, 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Travers, op.cit., p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>P.C.R.O. 193 A/1/1/1/2 and 3, 28 Feb. 1844, 3, 7 Nov., 29 Dec. 1852, 6 Sept. 1854.

<sup>4</sup>At least one relieving officer was threatened with dismissal for excessive generosity: Travers, op.cit.

relief because she was 'insolent'. Only in the 'sixties did the Landport radicals re-establish Dewdney's concern for the paupers as poor, but still members of the community; and their concern was moderated by enthusiasm for economy. If paupers were expected to be deferential, employees were expected to be respectful, and the Guardians frequently showed a sharp concern for social placing that suggests that they were themselves anxious about their own status. Of course, there were employees whose behaviour could hardly have been expected to escape comment: the chaplain, for instance, detected 'in certain conduct not expected in gentlemen of his cloth'; but the disputes with the M.O.s indicate something deeper<sup>1</sup>.

The motives of the Guardians were mixed. Some no doubt saw themselves as doing what their title suggested: guarding the interests of ratepayers and poor. On the whole, they were concerned with holding down the rate, and this could well involve them in what might look like a pig-headed opposition to 'progress'. To take one example, one Guardian in 1848 opposed the appointment of an inspector of nuisances on the grounds of the rate burden, brushing aside fears of an epidemic with the words, 'the worst typhus in Portsea Union was the Poor Rate, for it bid fair to destroy everything'<sup>2</sup>. Yet, while concerned at the rate burden, this group does not seem

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<sup>1</sup>Portsmouth Times, 28 Sept. 1850. See also the later dispute with Dr Page, H.T., 22 Oct., 5 Nov., 1870; cf. Rose, Relief of Poverty, pp. 24-5.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 28 Oct. 1848.



to have been above a little jobbing. When the old Clerk died, the new appointment was William Devereux, a Conservative who happened to be a Guardian for St Thomas's. Thomas Pratt Wills, a Portsea wine merchant, was made a rate collector and then Union clerk in 1865, despite the fact that he had been bankrupted in 1852; Wills was the nephew of the Board's Tory chairman, John Friend Pratt. In 1868 John Augustus Howell Howell, a radical Guardian, was given two Union posts<sup>1</sup>. Nor was Portsea Island without the usual dark murmurings about the way contracts were handled. The two main motives of Guardians were probably a heated desire to do something about the town's rates; and personal and political power.

These motives to some extent separated the Board from the urban gentry who lived at Southsea, and also from the town's political leaders. None of the Carter group ever sat on the Board; whether because it was of insufficient status to attract them, or because it might bring unpopularity upon them, is not apparent. Nor did other Whig leaders sit at the Board. Those political leaders who served as Guardians were definitely of a lower status than most councillors: Arthur Cudlipp, for instance, a pawnbroker and chairman of the Conservative Workingmen's Association, was elected in 1870; perhaps he was serving some sort of political apprentice-

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 16 Dec. 1865, 2 Feb., 26 Sept. 1868, 29 May 1869;  
P.R.O. B.6/99.

ship, for he had been an overseer in 1867 and had been trying to get onto the Board since 1868. The most respectable occupation to enter the Board in large numbers were the solicitors: both of the Ford brothers served, Henry briefly in the 1840s and Richard in the late 'fifties and the 'sixties for a longer period; both had been councillors (Tory) before they became Guardians, and were exceptions from the general run of the mill.

The ability of small business to dominate the Board lay largely in the nature of the electorate. The expansion of the Yard from the 1840s, and the adoption of the Small Tenements Rating Act of 1852, meant that the electorate was predominantly composed of working men and small independent businesses; wealthy property owners and occupiers were isolated<sup>1</sup>. Small businessmen had an incentive to get onto the Board in the enormity of the local rates, given an added flavour by the question of government property. The dominance of the Board by Tories and Radicals in the 1860s was leading to rather heated meetings, in which Howell and his ally J.J. Killpartrick usually embroiled themselves. In 1870 alone, Killpartrick tried to hit the workhouse governor in January, brought a rowdy group of radical friends into another meeting, and objected to a vote of thanks to a resigning matron. Howell, not to be outdone, was thrown bodily from one meeting by the governor and drill-master, called another Guardian (Arthur Cudlipp) 'a red herring'

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<sup>1</sup>The dockyardmen were said to have been Howell's great supporters: H.T., 23 April 1870.

who had eaten so much Union food that he 'looks like a couple of Jews rolled into one', then tried to throw Cudlipp out of the window. In December Howell and Killpartrick produced evidence suggesting that the governor supplied insufficient food to the schoolchildren; they abused the man so much that he broke into tears. 'No bellowing', Howell told him, 'Be a man', and Killpartrick tried to hit him with a chair. The meeting closed when 'the majority of the Guardians at length hurried out of the room, leaving Mr Orsmond despatching the brandy-and-water for which he had called, and Mr Howell raving at the top of his voice'. Orsmond himself had shaken the hand of the Union bandmaster, when the latter punched the governor during the annual fete at Portchester<sup>1</sup>.

By the 1860s there was no question of Board membership conferring prestige in the eyes of local elites. The Southsea Observer insisted that 'there is scarcely a gentleman, in the real acceptation of the term, who will allow himself to be nominated as a Guardian of the poor'. Southsea, with its near-aristocratic tone, was liable to feel particularly lonely when it contemplated the way that the poor rates were administered; 'it behoves all of us', the Observer said, 'to do our best to remove everything which may be calculated to bring us into contempt with our neighbours and those who visit us during the season'<sup>2</sup>. The inhabitants of Southsea might have wealth, but the power which it conferred could not

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 15 Jan., 26 Feb., 12 Mar., 21 May, 16 July, 17 Dec. 1870; Portsmouth Times, 12 Mar. 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Southsea Observer and Visitors' Directory, 7 Aug. 1874.

be exerted locally; frequently renting their own homes, their own property consisted largely of rentier holdings elsewhere. They could no more change the minds of voters in the local elections than they could prevent the poor from using 'their' beach. In some other towns, the poor law was run by the established local elite, but this generally rested upon the possession of large-scale, local economic power - something that was relatively unusual in Portsmouth<sup>1</sup>.

There was some degree of overlap in the early years of the New Poor Law between the Guardians and the charities. To some extent the personnel overlapped: Travers, for instance, was an active donor, and Dewdney was reknowned for his activity on behalf of 'the afflicted and distressed poor'. He was, for instance, president of the Portsea Compassionate Society, which tried to combine religious instruction with charitable relief through domestic visitation. Dewdney's view of the relationship which ought to obtain between state and voluntary relief was this:

The proper scope of public and private charity respectively is the providing of necessities by the former, of comforts by the latter; not leaving to semi-starvation by the one, that the deficiency might be made up by the other, and life just sustained between them.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. N. McCord, 'Philanthropy in Tyneside', in Institute of Economic Affairs (ed.), The Long Debate on Poverty, 1974, and 'The Poor Law and Philanthropy', in D. Fraser (ed.), op.cit., pp. 87-110. J. Fido says that poor law and charity were administered by the same people, though not supporting the assertion: 'The Charity Organisation and Social Casework in London, 1869-1900', in A.P. Donajgrodzki (ed.), Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1977, pp. 213-4.

Dewdney regarded state and civil society as woven together by threads of Christian duty; both the poor law and private associations might exercise 'charity', a word that for Dewdney had strongly religious associations, binding donor and recipient together as man was bound to his god. The Christian's bounden duty was to mitigate the impact of

sin and its natural consequences, ignorance, poverty, and suffering....Having been himself made a partaker of the manifest blessings of the providence and grace of his God and Saviour, he esteems it to be his delight to do good... and thus to manifest his love and sense of obligation to Him, in willing obedience to His command, and in cheerful imitation of His example.

Charity, public or private, was in this view deemed to stem from one set of obligations, leading to another set, between man and man<sup>1</sup>.

Such expressions were, of course, widespread, and were by no means confined to Anglicans or Conservatives<sup>2</sup>. And in

Portsmouth as elsewhere, to make sure that the charities were actually fulfilling the functions which were variously supposed to be fulfilled by them, there had to be some sort of discrimination between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor<sup>3</sup>.

The need to discriminate effectively may have been the greater from decline in subscriptions of some charities (See Table Eight). The Portsea Compassionate Society declined very

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<sup>1</sup>Times, 18 Sept. 1838; A.R., Portsea Compassionate Society, 1840, 1848, P.C.L.

<sup>2</sup>C.f. G.S. Jones, Outcast London; D.C. Ward, op.cit.; J. Fido, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup>B. Harrison has explored philanthropic motivations in 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', Victorian Studies, ix, 1966, pp. 353-74.

TABLE EIGHT: INCOME AND ACTIVITIES OF THE PORTSEA COMPASSIONATE  
SOCIETY, 1836-57

	Total subscribed	Average subscription	Number relieved
	£	£	£
1836	52	0.46	106
1837	54	0.49	113
1840	47	0.47	92
1848	33	0.43	78
1849	36	0.44	77
1854	32	0.35	63
1857	27	0.36	58

Sources: Annual Reports, P.C.L. (L.P.)

rapidly in effectiveness after the disturbed 1830s (it recovered slightly after 1848, the year of revolutions, when the Society expressed the view that Britain's 'tranquillity' required more charity). By 1854 the visitors found themselves unable to help many of the poor whom they met; 'to administer advice and instruction alone to them [i.e. to the poor<sup>7</sup>], is but to make light of their sufferings, and to increase rather than to alleviate their misery'. The Hebrew Mendicity Society was established by Emanuel Emanuel, who found that poor Jews were kept from the workhouse through a

mode alike unsatisfactory to the donor and embarrassing to the recipient....To the individual whom misfortune reduces to the painful necessity, the practice of seeking alms from door to door is a source of unmerited and degrading humiliation while the charitable are too frequently disturbed and annoyed when engaged in their business pursuits, and especially so by that class of practiced and importunate beggars who commonly resort to falsehood and insolence to achieve their purpose of imposition.

The Society aimed at institutionalizing charity, thereby weeding out doubtful claims<sup>1</sup>.

The problem was that institutionalized charity, by removing donor and recipient from personal contact with one another, might encourage the poor to regard charity impersonally and without gratitude or feeling. Some institutions tried to balance the need for donors to make some contact with recipients with the desire for discrimination. The Southsea Industrial Society, for instance, which gave needlework out to poor women and distributed the clothing to claimants, allowed subscribers to give out tickets to claimants. At the same time, it urged the subscribers 'to be very careful as to whom they give their tickets'. Others tried to run effective checks for themselves, using a full-time agent as go-between; the Portsea Town Mission chose a working-class woman, in the belief that she was 'pretty sure to find herself at home in cases where ladies would falter and withdraw'<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, institutional charity had the advantage that your name was printed and circulated, so that charity was a visibly philanthropic act. The importance of status claims in philanthropy should probably not be over-stated, but nonetheless they were present in some degree.

Above all, the charities were dominated by the well-to-do. Although clergy often formed a majority of the committees,

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<sup>1</sup>Portsea Compassionate Society, A.R.s, 1848, 1854, P.C.L.

<sup>2</sup>Mission of the Good Shepherd, Portsea, Appeal, 1870; A.R., Southsea Industrial Society, 'n.d.

there were always a number of elite males, men who wouldn't have been seen dead in the Guardians' boardroom. Women, of course, often ran charities: the Southsea Industrial Society was controlled by Mrs. Edwin Jones and Mrs. Joseph Blake - the wives of a Southsea landed proprietor and a Portsea mercer, both Tories. The Portsmouth Industrial and Clothing Society was also dominated by women, its secretary being the wife of Dr W.A. Raper. The Hebrew Mendicity Society, of course, was sponsored mainly by local Jews, but its subscribers included several leading Whigs: Sir Francis Baring, Bonham W. Carter, and the manager of the Carters' brewery, Capt. George Eveleigh. Charities evoked the commitment of men who seem to have had no other interests in entering public life: John Faulkner, for instance, a glass merchant and plumber who left £5,000 on his death in 1861, gave much of it to the Lancasterian Institute, the Hospital, the Beneficial Society, the Seamen's and Marines' Orphan School, the London Deaf and Dumb Society, the Institute for the Blind, and the Unitarian Benevolent Society; he also made small amounts over to his servants, workmen and apprentices<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Hebrew Mendicity Society, A.R., 1859; Southsea Industrial Society, cit.; Portsmouth Industrial and Clothing Society, 1860, A.R.; all in P.C.L. Also H.T., 21 July 1860. And see for female involvement, F. Prochaska, 'Women in English Philanthropy, 1790-1830', International Review of Social History, xix, 1974, pp. 426-45.



Charities were most successful in attracting the support of the affluent when they could show that they were not being cheated, or 'imposed upon'. The most obvious case of genuine need was something that was physically observable, like illness or injury or orphanhood. The Hospital, set up in 1848, benefitted from this distinction, attracting a wide range of bourgeois support, ranging from business (William Grant, the banker; J.E. Burne, a large miller and corn merchant), the Southsea entrepreneurs (T.E. Owen, Benjamin Bramble), the urban 'gentry' (the Countess of Northesk, Lord George Lennox), the Vicars, to the political leaders (Barings, Carters, Deacons, and so on). Yet the Hospital became involved in a prolonged dispute with its medical staff, ending with the doctors assuming virtual control over the charity. The dispute is interesting for the light that it throws upon charitable motivations.

Relying on the willingness of local surgeons to practice free of charge, the Hospital Committee at first insisted on setting the staff rota. The majority of local surgeons and physicians refused to accept this, and for some time refused to serve with the Hospital at all. The one member of the Committee who gave his support to the medical men (Revd. Howard Hawkes, of the High Street Unitarian chapel), was promptly kicked off the Committee. Staffed by renegades, the Hospital was opened in 1849. The bulk of the subscribers had, like Major Travers, refused even to consider such 'an absurd point of etiquette':

The question appeared to him to be - was the Hospital to be under the direction of a Managing Committee, or were the medical gentlemen to do as they pleased (Hear).

When the medical men won the right to make staff appointments and run the Hospital's affairs, several subscribers pulled out (including Major-General Breton), and two committee members resigned. Owen complained that 'gentlemen representing £600 or £700 of contributions' had prevailed over 'gentlemen who represented almost as many thousands'<sup>1</sup>.

What concerned many leading subscribers was not solely charity, but the desire to be seen exerting charity as an act of community leadership. Hawkes thought that the majority of the subscribers 'gave me the impression, that if they contended for the poor, they contended more vehemently for the PATRONAGE!'. This is not necessarily true of all the subscribers: Sir Charles Ogle actually increased his subscription when the matter was settled in 1857. Yet the majority, and certainly the committee members, resented the challenge to their public authority represented by the 'combination' of the doctors. If not concerned with status as much as philanthropy, subscribers to a Hospital would hardly have cared two hoots if the medical men - who after all had one set of criteria by which to judge - made appointments rather than a miscellaneous group of clergymen, officers, lawyers and businessmen. The medical men were successfully imposing their own definitions of medicine's status, hoping to win public recognition of the qualifications which announced this status<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 30 Sept., 7, 14, 21 Oct., 2 Dec. 1848, 4, 18 July, 1 Aug. 1857; Portsmouth Times, 13 Apr. 1850.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 7 Oct. 1848, 18 July, 1 Aug. 1857.

The charities performed a number of roles that were linked only tenuously to their supposed ends. This was nothing new, as poor Nicodemus Boffin found out when he became the Golden Dustman. One consequence was the gradual ebbing of the town-centre charities such as the Portsea Compassionate Society (see Table Eight), which came to rely increasingly on the small subscriptions of lower class supporters. Instead, there grew up a new class of charities around the bourgeois suburb, Southsea, often run by two or three men or women. Indeed, one has the impression that new charities sprang up rather as political campaigns do today: each small group would search for a viable object, then announce to the world that they had a new cause to demand support. Again, the evidence of Dickens suggests that this was not confined to Portsmouth; however, the fact that these societies were mostly concentrated on Southsea placed the older towns and the poor suburb of Landport in an under-privileged position. In these instances, by the 1860s, charities were less connected to status-winning, than attempts by those who had status already to overcome the consequences of social distance.

With a long-established urban working class and a tradition of the Workhouse test, popular responses to poverty remained much as in the earlier period. Membership of Friendly societies of one kind or another seems to have grown much faster than did population, although the fastest rates were recorded for a burial club (see Table Nine). Increasingly, too, people joined national friendly societies such as the

TABLE NINE: MEMBERSHIP OF SOME LOCAL FRIENDLY SOCIETIES,  
1815-70

	St. Thomas's Amicable B.S. (est. 1826)	Union Burial Fund S.	Dockyard Union Insurance S. (est. 1824)	Provident and Humane Societ (est. 1810)
1815				
1816				
1817				
1818				
1819		227		
1820				
1821		346		
1822				
1823				
1824		476		
1825		577		
1826	8	658		
1827		745		
1828		797		
1829		858		
1830		924		
1831		996		1,213
1832		1,044		
1833		1,123	256	
1834		1,200		
1835		1,248		
1836		1,312		
1837		1,407		
1838		1,473		
1839		1,530		
1840		1,592	307	
1841		1,666		1,362

	St Thomas's Amicable B.S.	Union Burial Fund	Dockyard Union Insurance S.	Provident and Humane Society
1842		1,750	338	
1843	421	1,875		
1844		2,061		
1845		3,186		
1846		3,446	380	
1847	660	3,702	384	
1848		3,963	383	
1849		4,332	404	
1850		4,756		
1851	700	4,756		1,340
1852	800	5,368	398	
1853		5,716		
1854	765	6,032		1,101
1855		6,176		1,044
1856		6,300		1,007
1857	918	6,631		
1858	921	6,921		
1859	923	7,211		874
1860	960	7,529	395	
1861	968	7,775		
1862	967	8,010		
1863	981	8,267		
1864		8,466		
1865	987	8,699	390	
1866		8,931		
1867	1,061	9,223		
1868	1,023	9,464		
1869	1,033	9,750		
1870	1,039		336	

Sources: Newspaper reports, A.R.s of Portsmouth Dockyard  
 Union Insurance Society and the Provident and Humane  
 Society, both in P.C.L., L.P.; Register of Admissions,  
 Union Burial Fund Society, P.C.R.O., 118A/1/1/1;  
 Abstract of Quinquennial Returns of Friendly Societies,  
 Parl. Papers 1880, lxviii.

Foresters, although local organizations continued. There were also a number of less formal ways of self-help, brought to light by the 1873 inquiry. A number were regarded as actuarially and morally unsound, in particular the 'broken bone' clubs in the Yard; these only collected if a member was injured, when all paid 1d a week until he returned to work. It was alleged, with horror, that it would not be difficult for a man in the Yard who belonged to a broken bone club, and a friendly society, and receiving half-pay from the Yard, to earn more when injured than he did when at work<sup>1</sup>.

There was also some criticism of the Friendly societies' continued habit of meeting in pubs; even the ultra-respectable Beneficial Society drank on club nights, held in its own hall. While inebriety, gaming or fighting were forbidden by the rules of many clubs, this was nothing new: the Beneficial Society had renounced all these things at the start of the century, and refused benefit to members suffering from venereal disease. It is, then, as difficult for Portsmouth as for London or Edinburgh to establish any direct relationship between friendly societies and such values as respectability or thrift - or even, bearing the Yard clubs in mind, the chief of the Smilesian virtues, industry<sup>2</sup>. Even a straightforward matter like relationships

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<sup>1</sup>Report of the Assistant Commissioner for the Southern and Eastern Counties of England to the Friendly and Benefit Societies Commission, Parl. Papers 1874, xxiii, part II, p. 20, 27.

<sup>2</sup>South of England Temperance Chronicle, May 1863; Proceedings of the Beneficial Society, 23 Dec. 1822, 6 Mar. 1837; see also the rules of the St Thomas Amicable Benefit Society, 1830, P.C.L. For Edinburgh, see Gray, op.cit.; for London, G.J. Crossick, op.cit.

with local leaders is hard to establish: there was a Lord George Lennox Lodge of the Oddfellows (as well as a Gladstone Lodge); Howell used his position as chairman of a Foresters' Lodge to publicly attack the Telegraph's editorial policy. On the whole, the Portsmouth friendly societies sought their patronage sparingly. An annual dinner or an outing to Portchester Castle might see a guest speaker or two celebrating the festivities: the Oddfellows' in 1852 paraded through the town, went by train to Portchester where they played cricket, archery and shooting, and then listened to addresses from Richard Andrews (Mayor of Southampton, and a noted self-made man), Dr. Rolph, and Julian Slight, who extolled Andrews as the 'Whittington of Southampton'. Slight was among the patrons at the dinner of the Loyal Bonham Carter Lodge of Oddfellows in 1870, and the Mayor chaired the dinner of the Court Mechanics' Hope of Foresters<sup>1</sup>. These societies did help to accommodate working men to capitalist society, yet this is not the same as saying that they accepted the values of those that they asked to attend their meetings.

As well as the lodges and courts of the national societies, many local benefit clubs were obviously thriving. The burial club in Table Nine seems to have flourished in this period, although it is possible that many of its new members never paid enough subscriptions to get in benefit (this is suggested by the fact that the numbers given in the register

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 23 Feb., 12 Nov., Portsmo Times, 12 Feb. 1870.

of admissions are always higher than those reported in local newspapers at the A.G.M.; since these reports are not continuous they were not used). Even so, nearly ten thousand people is a remarkable figure, and it seems that the Union Burial Fund was not even registered with Tidd Pratt! Of those that were, the Dockyard Insurance Society was composed primarily of manual workers, while the St Thomas's Amicable consisted primarily of manual workers including a large minority of mariners. Overwhelmingly working class, these societies often did entirely without (recorded) middle class patronage, except perhaps that of the publican.

The network of self-help organizations in Portsmouth, then, was extensive and often lay outside formal bourgeois control. The contrast can be seen when one looks at the Savings Bank, which of course was subjected to direct patronage. It was a purely instrumental institution, not given to the sociability which characterized the friendly societies. It would be wrong to see it as entirely separate from the latter, though, for friendly societies were among the largest depositors in the Banks. Twentyfour societies deposited in the Bank in 1851, for example, with average sums of £155 each. Equally, individual friendly society members might have joined the Bank. Less than half of the deposits represented sums of £20 or over, and the remainder of the Bank's holdings were in the hands of perhaps three per cent of the Island's population. Although the number of depositors grew steadily, the average deposit remained low: £28 in 1851, by 1863 it



had fallen to around £23<sup>1</sup>. It remained very much a minority pursuit, probably attracting less people than the Burial Fund alone.

The strength of the friendly societies in Portsmouth is probably due to several factors: the existence of a long-established tradition of organized mutuality in the co-ops and benefit societies that were a legacy of the town's industrial past; the fact that the worst poverty was confined among women and children, rather than adult males; and the tendency for the Yard men in particular to seek to advance their interests independently and to some extent outside the rest of the town's 'official' life, where possible.

Poverty and its treatment, then, rarely became a major public political issue, although it was widespread in the town. The only occasions when it did emerge into the limelight were those when the Dockyard's reduction started to affect other sectors of the economy, such as the post-war years or the late 1860s, or when charities became in some way contentious, as when the Hospital row broke out. The absence of the obsessive commenting that went on in, say, London does not mean that poor relief or self-help played little part in the town's social history. The fact that poverty was normally confined to women or marginal groups like ex-servicemen

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 20 Dec. 1851, 5 Dec. 1863. Apparently one household in four had a member whose Savings Bank deposit came to £20 or more in Preston; in Portsmouth, the level was around one family in six. Cf. M. Anderson, op.cit., p. 32.

meant that the Yard workers in particular did not regard poor law institutions from the point of view of possible claimants. When the possibility of the workhouse did emerge, in the late 1860s, 'respectable' workmen demonstrated outside the houses of leading magistrates, expressing their 'great horror' at the possibility. One shipwright complained that if a skilled man were given work on road repairing in exchange for relief, he could lose 'caste in the opinion of his fellow-workmen'. The solution chosen by discharged Yard artizans was characteristically an individualistic one: emigration to Canada<sup>1</sup>. This choice must itself have been produced by the sense of shock which the workhouse gave to men whose previous relationships to the poor law had been as ratepayers and voters.

Particularly given the transfer of power in the Portsea vestry in 1817, it seems that the New Poor Law was not in itself a remarkable watershed, then. It led to no major opposition from the local working class, and Tories who denounced the Act found themselves with very limited support. Most inhabitants of the workhouse were elderly, insane, or physically disabled; women and children continued to receive out-relief, often in kind (in particular, medical treatment). The out-relief to these groups may well have benefited the masters in the clothing trades, for more than one woman is described in the census as receiving parish aid and plying a

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 20, 23 Jan. 1869.

needle. In crises, men received out-relief as well. The Poor Law played little part in forming local working class consciousness, which was something else that marked Portsmouth off from Lancashire and Yorkshire.

How did poverty and its treatment affect 'middle class consciousness'? In the first place, it seems to have confirmed, and perhaps increased, the tendency of small businessmen to see themselves as the 'natural representatives' of popular interests. They stood for the interests of all who paid rates, who were oppressed by the burdens thrown on the town by the Government, and who were independent enough to speak out fearlessly. The style and behaviour of this group served to reinforce the divisions between small businessmen (based on Portsea and Landport) and the social elites (based upon High Street and Southsea). Men from the social elites preferred to take action through the charities, generally along with their wives. This was important, for wives in particular otherwise had little contact with the 'working classes' (apart from as servants), and their social attitudes were no doubt coloured by their picture of working people as alternately deferential and demanding, probably improvident and often begging. Many of the men, whose incomes derived from rentier sources, felt the same as the women; this lack of experience of the working class that once again marked the Southsea group off from the small masters and traders of the other suburbs. The whole area of poor relief certainly did not see the unambiguous 'control' of 'the poor'

by 'the rich' or 'the middle class'<sup>1</sup>. There was no unified 'middle class' on this issue, but rather a rough and not always distinct division between two groups, one leading the charities, the other sitting as Guardians. Nor was the 'control' unambiguous. The world of the friendly societies (a much more typical world than the workhouse) was overwhelmingly a working class one, and only rarely, on formal, ritual occasions was it open to the bourgeoisie. Even the charities tended to be damaged by the fear that recipients were cheating them. The poor law authorities, although rarely facing any serious challenge to their authority, found that they could operate most smoothly by taking account of working class interests, and permitting out-relief to able-bodied men at times of cyclical or seasonal unemployment. In so far as these areas may have contributed to social stability, then, they did so in more complex ways than is suggested by the phrase of 'social control'.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. A. Donajgrodzki, 'Introduction' to op.cit., pp. 9, 15.

## CHAPTER NINE: SCHOOLING FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR

It has long been argued that early nineteenth century educational reformers were motivated more by their concern for preserving the social order than by any desire for social mobility or the diffusion of information. The very words, 'education', 'enlightenment' and 'knowledge' are thought to embody very specific meanings, in which religion, political economy, and obedience were included<sup>1</sup>. The difficulty with such interpretations of Victorian education is that they rest largely upon the openly stated motives of educators. But when it came to educating the poor of urban England rather than writing in the Westminster Review, good intentions met not with some 'raw, undifferentiated mass of humanity', but with communities of men and women whose intentions, good or not, were rather different. A detailed examination of how educational institutions operated in Portsmouth may lead to few firm conclusions about its efficacy as an agent of 'social control', but is likely to be more accurate than an account which rests largely upon detached statements by London-based theorists.

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<sup>1</sup>R. Johnson, 'Educational Policy and Social Control in early Victorian England', Past and Present, xlix, 1970, pp. 96-119; B. Rosen, 'Education and Social Control of the Lower Classes in England in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century', Pedagogica Historica, xiv, 1974, pp. 92-105; P. Corrigan & S. Frith, 'The Politics of Youth Culture', Working Papers in Cultural Studies, vii/viii, 1975, pp. 231-41.

The expansion of schooling facilities throughout England occurred rapidly, so that by the 1850s children who attended no school whatever were probably isolated exceptions. This was as true of Portsmouth as elsewhere: in 1851, over two-thirds of the age-group between five and fourteen years old were on the books of one day school or another - roughly the same as Armstrong found in the case of York<sup>1</sup>. Portsmouth came tenth in a table of English towns ranked according to the number of schoolchildren in a ratio to total population, so that although badly provided for in comparison with surrounding Hampshire, its population was plentifully provided for compared with the rest of urban England (see Table One). Yet the town's illiteracy rates were much worse than those for the surrounding area: throughout the 1850s and 1860s, illiteracy (as manifested in inability to sign one's name on the marriage register) was above Southampton, and slightly above Hampshire as a whole (see Table Two). This alone leads to doubts about the way that schools were operating.

Most illiterates were women - 70% in 1855, 65% in 1860 - and again this is much higher than elsewhere in the county, where ignorance was divided equally between the sexes. It is possible that girls were less likely to attend school than were boys, but this is so marginal for 1851 that it is unlikely to be the cause (see Table Three). The explanation for the difference between the performance of young women

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<sup>1</sup>A. Armstrong, op.cit., p. 67.

TABLE ONE: PROPORTION OF DAY SCHOOL PUPILS TO POPULATION, 1851

	Population	Proportion at school: one in
Birmingham	232,841	11.0
Bristol	137,328	7.7
Devonport	38,180	7.4
Liverpool	375,955	8.6
Manchester	303,382	11.6
Oldham	52,820	13.1
York	36,303	6.3
Southampton	35,305	6.4
Hampshire	335,365	10.9
Portsmouth	72,096	7.6

Source: W.B. Stephens, *Regional Variations in Education During the Industrial Revolution, 1780-1870: The Task of the Local Historian*, Leeds, 1973, pp.30-2<sup>1</sup>.

TABLE TWO: PROPORTION OF BRIDES AND GROOMS SIGNING THE  
MARRIAGE REGISTER WITH A MARK, 1870

	Brides	Grooms
Portsmouth	20%	13%
Southampton	13%	14%
Hampshire	15%	16%

Source: 23rd Rep. of the Registrar General, *Parl. Papers*, 1872, xvii, pp. 2-3, 8-9.

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<sup>1</sup>These figures are undoubtedly affected by the age structure of the population; I hope they still indicate tendencies.

TABLE THREE: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RATES OF BOYS AND GIRLS IN  
PORTSMOUTH, 1851

Age group 5-14	% 'at home'	% 'scholars'	% in paid employment
Boys	31.2	59.7	9.1
Girls	35.1	58.5	6.5

Source: Population census sample.

and that of young men might lie partly in the tendency of young countrywomen to migrate into the town, there to find a husband. But it is much more likely to be a product of the structure of Portsmouth's education system.

Portsmouth was almost unique in having more children at private schools than at public ones. While Southampton in 1851 stood close to the national average of two children at a public day school for every child at a private one, Portsmouth relied heavily upon what Matthew Arnold called 'desultory private enterprise'. Moreover this was a persistent pattern, for in the early 1870s Portsmouth still had far more of its children at private schools than had Southampton (see Table Four). Moreover, the overwhelming majority of Portsmouth's private schools were not middle class academies, but classic dame schools, run by poor women. It was a way of making a living that was probably more pleasant than needlework, easier than prostitution, requiring less capital than a shop. Although dignified by the name of 'school', the dame's room was as like a National school as a washerwoman's tub was like a steam laundry. Although there is no direct evidence to support the idea,



TABLE FOUR: PERCENTAGE OF ALL DAY SCHOOL PUPILS ATTENDING A PRIVATE SCHOOL IN PORTSMOUTH AND SOUTHAMPTON, 1851 AND 1870.

	1851	1870
Portsmouth	52	30
Southampton	41	11

Source: Census of Great Britain, 1851: Education, England and Wales, Parl. Papers 1852-53, xc, pp. 230 - 31; P.R.O., ED 16/99 and 100.

possibly parents in Portsmouth were prepared to commit resources to the serious education of a son, in the hope that he might win an apprenticeship in the Yard. A daughter was another matter, and she might well spend her childhood in the company of a child-minder while her mother was at work.

It was arrangements for child-minding such as these that the 1870 Education Act was intended to by-pass. The Act marked the culmination of a whole stage of development, not only of formal schooling through the National and British Societies, but also of administrative expertise through the Education Department<sup>1</sup>. Therefore my main concern at present is with the religious and other influences which formed the public day schools that embraced about one-third of Portsmouth's school population in 1851. Broadly speaking, the purposes of the organisers are examined, largely through an examination of their public statements - statements often made with the hope of persuading potential subscribers to part with their money. However, these statements of intent were just so much hot air unless they could be negotiated through three sets of relationships: between organizers and teachers, between organizers and the rest of the local bourgeoisie, and between schools and children and the rest of the working class community.

Educational promoters themselves had few doubts about the purposes of popular education. The Committee of the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. J. Hurt, Education in Evolution: Church, State, Society and Popular Education, 1800-1870, 1972.

Lancasterian Institute, opened in 1813, claimed that their boys had

been taught to read and write, and have been instructed in habits of order and attention, and in the duties of Religion and morality ....Order, subordination, morality and religion, are substituted for vice, intemperance and immorality 1.

The Anglicans of the National Schools saw their efforts as 'the nursery of Good Order, of Decency, of Cleanliness and of Useful Instruction'. The Sunday School movement

in diffusing through the humble ranks of society, sound Christian principles, which germinate in good and loyal subjects, is of vast advantage to Society; no stronger evidence of which need be offered, than the progressively improving appearance, in decent attire and submissive orderly conduct, of those children whose parents live in parts of the town that are known to be most depressed by poverty, and degraded by low sensual habits 2.

The aims of education were, in this early period, to instil good order, 'morality', and a sense of duty into the children of the poor. The statements are clear, admit of no misunderstanding, and have no nonsense about them.

The explicit stress upon social control is not surprising, and cannot be equated with a simple-minded desire to 'keep the poor down', at least not in every case. The 1817 Report of the Lancasterians makes it plain that marching the poor along the paths of righteousness was an extremely kindly act. It would lift them from a state of ignorance, that 'state

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<sup>1</sup>A.R., Lancasterian Institute, 1814, P.C.L.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 8 Apr. 1822.

of debasement approaching to brutality'; the children would

have an opportunity to learn the pure and sublime morality of the Bible, and be enabled to inform themselves of its contents, and made wise, not only as to the concerns of this world but as to their interests in regard to that which is to come.

The lesson that would be taught the children along the path was in part political: the ignorant, such as the Irish, were most likely to 'form wild and extravagant notions as to their rights and grievances; to be led away by factious and designing men, even to the overthrow of the best of governments',<sup>1</sup>.

While the tone of discussion became less fulsome, the aims of educators were the same in the fifties. The Telegraph in 1853 produced a lengthy editorial on 'that tide of events which is rapidly giving an enormous increase of power and importance to the operative classes', warning that

It can never be too much insisted on that the future well-being of the upper and middle classes depends entirely on the amount of good sense and moderation to be found among the working classes. With all the influences which are at work in the present day, and which are rapidly loosening the old bonds which have held society together, it is absolutely necessary, if we would avoid frightful social convulsions, that the working classes may receive such an education as may qualify them for forming a sound judgement of the novel circumstances by which they are surrounded on every side.

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<sup>1</sup>A.R., 1817. Contrasts between the idle, brutal and ignorant Irish and the orderly, industrious and educated Scottish formed part of the argument of political economists: E.G. West, 'The Role of Education in Nineteenth Century Doctrines of Political Economy', British Journal of Educational Studies xii, 1963-64, pp. 163-4.

As in 1817, 'demagogues' and 'tyrants' preyed upon ignorance to spread 'Socialistic ideas, as they are called'. As in 1817, education was to provide the answer to the demagogues by helping the working class 'to understand and fully appreciate the position in which it is placed'<sup>1</sup>. But the translation of this general commitment into specific educational practices is harder to measure.

What was taught; and how was it received? The first question can be answered by looking at teaching methods and equipment. Both Lancasterian and National Schools saw themselves as primarily teachers of religion: even science, claimed the Lancasterians, 'without scriptural instruction...might be perverted to the worst of evil'. Both insisted that children should attend church every Sunday. The books held by Portsmouth National School in 1831 give a fair idea of how the teaching must have sounded: 224 Bibles and Testaments, 130 copies of 'Parables of our Saviour', 162 of 'A History of our Blessed Saviour', 124 'Sermons on the Mount', and so on, down to the only non-religious titles: three copies of 'Mrs. Trimmer's Teacher's Assistant'<sup>2</sup>. In 1847 the H.M.I. complained that the girls had been taught 'solely religion', and even that badly. Both schools also aimed to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, together with needlework or knitting for girls<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 23 July 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Lancasterian Inst., A.R., 1833; Proceedings of the Portsmouth National School, June 1831, P.C.R.O.

<sup>3</sup>A.R. Lancasterian Inst., 1833; Portsmouth National Society Proceedings, 1 Nov. 1802, 2 June 1847. For some comments upon popular religious beliefs, see Chapter Eleven below.

This sheds some light on the argument that education encouraged, and was meant to encourage, industrial growth<sup>1</sup>. Harold Perkin, for instance, has spoken of the 'complete triumph of the entrepreneurial ideal throughout education'. If true, we should find some support in the experience of the vocational schools in the Dockyard where apprentices and boys were taught<sup>2</sup>. The instruction here was chiefly technical, consisting of hydrostatics, geometry, and naval architecture, although subjects like History, English and Religion were by no means forgotten. Qualifications have to be made to the view that the Yard school was purely technical, then, especially since a number of its masters were clergymen, while the students claimed to find 'unconcealed hostility' from the older Yard officers after graduating. There was an enormous degree of difference between the education of the apprentices (who included 'lads of superior intelligence and aptitude for learning') and the rivet boys and ropery boys ('generally in a very backward state, and the masters are employed...in attempting to give them the merest rudiments of an English education'). While the apprentices may have received a largely technical education, that of the future unskilled or semi-skilled men was probably closer to that found in the elementary schools<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.J. Perkin, op.cit., p. 302.

<sup>2</sup>See above, ch. vii; also D. Jack, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup>Revd. J. Woolley, in the Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, 1859, p. 450; 1860, p. 498; Fincham, in Parl. Papers, 1860, xlii, p. 296.

Apart from the Yard, Portsmouth had little in the way of conventional vocational training. The high levels of literacy and numeracy required for a shipwright were unknown for shoemakers, or errand boys; even shop men probably needed less strictly vocational education than did many Yardmen. For girls, matters were rather different: what was needed was 'humble and obedient servants', a matter upon which all educational promoters agreed. Indeed, the insistence that girls should be educated for service could be connected to an explicit decision to try to keep them out of the industrial labour market. The Committee of the Seamen and Marines Orphans School in 1850 referred to the difficulties it was having:

At present in too many instances, the poverty of their friends is so great that they cannot resist the temptation of taking the girls from school as soon as they have acquired sufficient skill in needlework, and sending them to the shirt and stay factories in this neighbourhood, where the small pittance they earn and the evil associations they are exposed to, place them in a situation of considerable danger; and totally unfit them for the respectable and honest condition of domestic servants.

Education here was seen, not as a way of making women more productive, but of keeping them out of industry entirely. Above all, a small elite was to be preserved from contamination by 'taking a few of the senior girls entirely out of the hands of their relations, and supporting them until they are old enough to go into service'<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>A.R., Seamen's and Marines' Orphans School, 1850, P.C.R.O.

The key words in defining the form, and much of the content, of nineteenth century education were 'order', 'subordination', and 'morality'. Educators laid great stress upon the value of punctual and regular attendance, habits of behaviour that obviously were parallel to the newer modes of industrial control.<sup>1</sup> The Telegraph had a 'strong opinion' on the subject of compulsory school attendance, regarding it as essential. Once having got the children to school, which was probably as important as what was eventually taught there, the onus fell upon teachers to carry out the job of training the young minds that sat in rows before them. How did the teachers perform their allotted tasks?

The first point is that teachers were frequently from the same social class as the children, and not from that of the educational promoters (see Table Five<sup>2</sup>), Considerable trouble was taken to educate these educators, and to ensure their respectability in the eyes of both children and the rest of the bourgeoisie. The Dockyard, entirely free from the need to placate fussy subscribers, could appoint a

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<sup>1</sup>For examples, see the Beneficial Society School, Visitor's Report Book, 15 Jan., 1829, 11, 23 Nov. 1830; Annual Report, Lancasterian Institute, 1833; Proceedings, Unitarian Sunday School, P.C.R.O. 257 A/1/5/1, 3 Feb. 1852; Proceedings, Portsmouth National School, 3 Apr., 3 July, 5 May, 23 Dec. 1830. For one way of viewing the relation between literacy, 'professional skill' and 'order or regularity', see Papers Relating to the School of Naval Architecture at Portsmouth, Parl. Papers 1833, xxiv, pp. 315-7.

<sup>2</sup>Hurt, op.cit., pp. 121-3; G. Mercer & D.J.C. Forsyth, 'Some Aspects of Recruitment to Schoolteaching among University Graduates in Scotland, 1860-1955', British Journal of Educational Studies xxii, 1974, p. 64; and Moseley's comments in Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, 1850, vol. 1, p. 21. These sources 'firm up' the somewhat thin evidence of this Table.



TABLE FIVE: INTER-MARRIAGE OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS WITH  
SCHOOLTEACHERS' FAMILIES, 1845-9 AND 1865-9

(a) <u>1845-9</u>	Prof- essions	Clerks	Retail- ers	Skilled	Semi- skilled	Un- skilled	Sei ic mar
Teachers marrying daughters of	2	-	-	2	3	-	2
Teachers' daughters marrying	-	-	2	1	-	3	1
(b) <u>1865-9</u>							
Teachers marrying daughters of	3	1	3	8	2	1	2
Teachers' daughters marrying	-	2	-	3	1	1	2

Note: Eight cases are not included, including three teachers marrying industrialists' daughters in 1865-9.

Sources: Anglican marriage registers.

working man if needs be; Robert Rawson, head of the Portsmouth School, was an ex-collier who still spoke in 'dialect' but was a superb practical mathematician. Rawson was given the task of writing a report on the list of candidates for apprenticeships rather than the Master Shipwright, 'My Lords wishing to give greater influence to the Schoolmaster'. By contrast, when John Pounds considered applying for a vacant post in the Portsmouth National School, the local curate discouraged him from even enquiring any further<sup>1</sup>.

The Beneficial Society seems to have chosen its masters with one eye to social acceptability and one to formal academic

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<sup>1</sup>R. Harley, Brief Biographical Sketch of Robert Rawson, n.d.; N.M.M. POR/P/39, 1 Feb. 1848; D.B. Price, A Memoir of the Late John Pounds of Portsmouth, Landport, 1893, p. 11.

qualifications. Perhaps this was a reaction to earlier disasters: in 1822 a master absconded after Society members discovered that he had embezzled funds, then had the books stolen; Charles Gladstains, his successor also ran off, although this time the books were left behind, revealing a loss of £36. In 1830 the Society's Committee examined the merits of several candidates for the post, and recommended one William Passingham, the possessor of a National Society teachers' certificate. Despite the Committee's request that the members would 'refrain from engaging their Votes', their recommendation was passed over, and one Thomas Slade was appointed. Although Slade had come only fourth in the examination held by the Committee, and possessed no formal qualification, he possessed one important informal qualification: he was a freemason. Appointment of teachers on the basis of their formal qualifications seems to have occurred far more frequently after the Education Department's inspectors started to produce their published reports on the state of the schools, and as the Societies came to rely increasingly upon the Government grant<sup>1</sup>.

Control over the teachers was increasingly a matter for the State. In the earlier period, boys and girls at Portsmouth

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Johnson, 'Social control...'; Portsea Beneficial Society, Proceedings, 8, 17 Apr. 1822, 9, 15 Nov. 1826, 5 Feb. 1827, 8, 15, 18, 20 Jan. 1830. Gladstains also seems to have been a freemason: C. Nock et al., History of the Royal Sussex Lodge, No. 342, Portsmouth, 1914, p. 17; W.L. Finemore, History of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, 1832-1932, 1939, p. 40.

National School were made 'Teacher of the First Class' (presumably this means monitor) at the age of twelve, 'having been in the School Two Years, and...guilty of no misconduct'. This was one school that tried to resist the Privy Council's 'interference', until it became necessary on financial grounds. From the time of the request for a grant in 1843, the H.M.I. made constant demands for improvements in the standard of teaching; it was decided to send the existing master and mistress to the Central School for training; in 1847 it was decided to dismiss the mistress after the H.M.I. had entered a critical report, and the National Society was asked to recommend a replacement<sup>1</sup>. By the 1850s, the provision of trained, qualified teachers was recognized as a basic task of the State<sup>2</sup>.

The master or mistress was, during these years, assisted by monitors. The monitors themselves, chosen from among the pupils, might hope to eventually become teachers. Although initially accepted with some enthusiasm, the monitorial system started to come under attack as the arguments in favour of trained teachers started to gain ground. Portsea National School, in 1838, made a sustained comparison between the education given to middle class children, and that provided for the working class; concluding that in schools for poor children

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<sup>1</sup>Proceedings, Portsmouth National Society, 3 Oct. 1832, 15 Apr., 3 May 1843, 2, 9 June, 1 Dec. 1847.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hurt, op.cit., ch.v.

we put two or three hundred children under one master or mistress, with no better assistance than that of monitors selected from the children themselves....Thus, while the range of subjects on which instruction is given is limited, the instruction itself is less interesting and useful than it should be ....even when the attendance of the scholar is both regular and prolonged to the usual limit, the knowledge gained is not in proportion to it. How much less when it is neither constant nor long continued: when poverty obliges parents to withdraw their children both oftener and earlier than they should, and thus adds another hindrance to those which were but too strong and too numerous before <sup>1</sup>.

The monitorial system continued, of course, largely because it was cheaper than any other. Yet recognition of its failings placed even more of the burden upon the teacher.

During this period, teachers themselves do not seem to have been able to mount any resistance to the authorities. Indeed, the evidence suggests that schoolteachers accepted ideologies of self-improvement and industry, as one would expect from their own experiences of upward social mobility. A schoolmasters' association was formed in 1848 for the purposes of mutual improvement, running two classes: one led by a lecturer from Chichester Central School, and one by a teacher from Portsea National Society. A Hampshire Church School Masters' Association, established in Winchester in 1854, spread to the south by 1860, run jointly by teachers and the Diocesan Board of Education. By 1871 something nearer a 'trade union' had been formed, with the South Hants Teachers'

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<sup>1</sup>Portsea National School, A.R., 1838, P.C.L. The Revd. Edmund Dewdney was secretary.

Association, but its first strike action in Portsmouth does not seem to have occurred until the 1890s. Otherwise teachers seem to have carried out the tasks expected of them, resorting in extreme cases to individual resignation<sup>1</sup>.

A major difference between middle-class and working-class education was the extent to which the former was allowed to take place in the home. The working class home was viewed with suspicion: children tended to resist, not so much what was taught, as the discipline associated with it; and in this, they were often sustained by their families. 'Nor is all yet told', lamented the Portsea National Society towards the end of its comparison between middle and working class schooling; 'How often is the discipline of school effectually thwarted by the indulgence of home. The master inculcates one thing; the parents another'. The worst disciplinary problem was truancy. The newly opened Lancasterian School, for example, could barely expand fast enough to cope with the demand for boys' places, and usually had a waiting-list of some 30-60 boys. Yet in each year at least one quarter of the boys left the school, and from the 1840s the figure was often over one half; the 1840s also saw a steady decline in the number of registered students, reaching as few as 190 at

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<sup>1</sup>Portsea and I.o.W. Advocate, 4 Mar. 1848; B.V. Spence, 'The Development of Elementary Education in Hampshire, 1800-1870', Durham M. Ed., 1967, ch. x. D.C. Savage, op.cit., p. 110. Sunday School teachers, of course, were not usually so dependent upon the patrons, and seem to have had greater control over the curriculum than did Day School teachers.

one point. In part this must have been due to personal or institutional factors: the master, who died in 1847, was 'an easy indulgent old man' (so said the prison chaplain, come to complain about the number of Lancasterians who had joined his flock). There was a parallel fall in attendance at the National School. Absenteeism generally stood at around twenty per cent of the total number of students during the thirties and forties, and at times reached as high as thirty per cent. For girls, the figures were even higher, while the Beneficial Society's girls' school lost almost three quarters of its 1851 intake within one year<sup>1</sup>.

Most working class children went to school irregularly and for a short time. As Table Three (p. 493 above) shows, this was not necessarily because they were working: quite a large number, particularly of the girls, were simply staying at home, perhaps looking after younger children while the mother went out, perhaps doing odd jobs like needlework or laundering. Once at school, the children often behaved in ways that attracted the teachers' wrath. Children were excluded for the more serious offences: the Lancasterian records show girls being thrown out for refusing to have their hair cut, for instance. The cases outlined in Table Five (involving infants, it should be remembered) show the kind of behaviour that disturbed teachers. Apart from lateness and absenteeism, the two main causes of disciplinary action, the teacher was most annoyed by various forms of disobedience: children were

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<sup>1</sup>A.R., 1838; Parl. Papers, 1851, xxvii, p.92; A.R., Lancasterian Inst.; Portsmouth National School, Proceedings; Beneficial Society, Girls' School Admissions Register, 1851, P.C.R.O.

TABLE SIX : DISCIPLINARY OFFENCES, ALL SAINTS' NATIONAL  
SCHOOL, 1863

	Number of cases reported
'Shewing temper'	1
Window-breaking	2
Fighting	2
Theft	3
Insubordination	4
Truancy, lateness	9

Source: All Saints' Infants School Log Book, P.C.R.O. 80A/6.

put in solitary confinement, whipped, or kept in for 'quarrelsomeness and obstinacy' or being 'disobedient and stubborn' or 'exceedingly rude & stubborn'. In 1827 it was complained that 'Disorderly Boys' were given to assaulting teachers; throwing stones at the school windows seems to have been endemic<sup>1</sup>.

In some cases, these children were punished by the teacher at the desire of a parent. George Andrews was whipped after his mother caught him stealing apples, and Thomas Kennett's grandfather reported the truancy which led to his detention. On the whole, however, parents were less cooperative. Two girls had to be excluded from the Beneficial Society School in 1838 after an incident involving 'insolence from their mother'. The Lancasterian Institute excluded sixteen boys in 1819 'in consequence of the little estimation in which these advantages were held by the parents, who careless and

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<sup>1</sup>See H.T., 22 Jan. 1827, 9 Sept. 1843 for examples.

inattentive in sending their children to the school, produced a neglect on the part of the boys'. If the school was regarded as central in transforming popular culture (and I think we have to use the word 'popular', embracing little masters, drink sellers, and other non-working class groups), the family was often seen as the major obstacle<sup>1</sup>.

In extreme cases the families of the poor could be viewed as mere associations, not really families at all. And again, discipline rather than any specific set of views or beliefs was the main focus of angry or sorrowful statements. Take the Lancasterian Institute:

something is wanting on the part of the poor  
....cases of juvenile depravity were either owing  
to extreme indulgence at home, or to the entire  
absence of parental care and control; particularly  
of personal neglect of public worship on the  
sabbath...; and in some instances to their  
examples of grossness of manners and profligacy  
of conduct at home, by which they have obliterated  
from the minds of the children any good impressions  
produced at school.

The theme was a common one. Even the Unitarian Sunday School found that parents were responsible, through their lack of enthusiasm, for the irregular attendance of the children<sup>2</sup>. Educators must have joined the Child Employment Commission in sharing the view that 'against no persons do the children of both sexes so much require protection as against their parents'<sup>3</sup>.

The Societies resorted to other means than simple force in disciplining children, and through them (it was hoped) their

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<sup>1</sup>Beneficial Society Girls' School Admission Register, 1837; Lancasterian Inst., A.R. 1819.

<sup>2</sup>Lancasterian Inst., A.R. 1828; Proceedings Unitarian Sunday School, Mar. 1848.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in K. Marx, op.cit., vol. 1, p. 459 - with approval.



class. Subscribers were encouraged to think of themselves as substitute parents (partly, perhaps, to coax more money out of their pockets by making them feel responsible). The supporters of the Lancasterian Boys' School were described as having 'for fourteen years watched its useful progress, and fostered it with parental anxiety'. Subscribers were invited to become regular visitors, establishing personal contact with students and 'endeavouring to check the progress of vice by timely admonition'. Parents were urged to accept some responsibility for their offsprings' attendance, although not to involve themselves in the school itself in any way. The introduction of fees, largely a result of the schools' financial difficulties, was not entirely unwelcome:

in a moral point of view, it has had the beneficial tendency of making the parents more interested in the advance of their children.

One way of encouraging obedience among the children, it was thought, was to enable them to

feel themselves, each individually, more respectable and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors.

In Sunday Schools, where attendance was more volatile than in day schools, teachers found that domestic visiting and regular attendance by themselves helped them build up a personal relationship with each child, so that 'they themselves from the more intimate acquaintance have been enabled to guide and instruct [the children] with the more pleasantness and satisfaction'<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, many of Portsmouth's

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<sup>1</sup>Lancasterian Inst., A.R.s, 1817, 1826, 1830; Proceedings Unitarian Sunday School, 16 Jan. 1851, 3 Feb. 1852.

parents continued to use private schools of one kind or another; the School Board survey of 1870 is certainly an under-estimate, for it only included those schools deemed 'efficient'; an independent survey showed that 46 per cent of the town's schoolchildren were in private education<sup>1</sup>.

Resistance from children and parents seems to have concentrated on the form of education, rather than its content. However, this was not the case with adult education, where consumers always insisted far more clearly upon the interests of patrons being adapted to take account of those who were to be patronized. Disagreements over the Mechanics' Institute were eventually resolved with the formula,

That the Proposed Institution be under the direction and superintendence of the Operative Classes themselves, aided only by such assistance from others, as they shall be desirous of receiving.

Of the sixteen journeymen on the Institute's first committee, twelve were from the most skilled trades, including four shipwrights and three millwrights. However, by the early 1830s the Institute was in difficulty, perhaps because of the Yard's reductions, and by the time of the 1849 investigation Institute (now called the Athenaeum) members were 'chiefly tradesmen'<sup>2</sup>. A government-inspired attempt to set up a penny library failed when the men demanded a say in the management and choice of books. The Watt Institute set up by the officers of the steam factory in the Yard in 1849

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 23 Nov. 1870.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 8 Aug. 1825, 10 Oct. 1831; Portsmouth Times, 11 Feb. 1899 (in Pescott Frost Coll., vol. 6); A.R. Literary and Philosophical Society, 1832; Rep. Sel. Committee on Public Libraries, Parl. Papers 1849, xvii, p. 208.

seems at first to have attracted mainly workmen from the factory among its members. While the Watt Institute had a sparkling band of patrons, and its more popular lectures attracted people from all over the town, the classes were less well attended: the largest was the writing class, with 40 people. By 1860 it seems as though the Watt Institute may have gone the way of the earlier venture, for it amalgamated with the Atheneum<sup>1</sup>. Proposals to establish public libraries in the town got absolutely nowhere, to the absolute frustration of middle-class community leaders. A poll in 1853 produced 1,100 votes against a library for 'the working classes' and a derisory 140 votes in favour. In 1860 a town meeting voted overwhelmingly against a similar proposal, to the disgust of local press, Mayor, and clergy. The same happened in 1869. The arguments were simple: a library would mean higher rates and bourgeois control, while newspapers were now so cheap that 'for a very small sum' any man could 'obtain all he wanted to read'. The result of decades of bourgeois control over elementary education had been to produce manifest working class cynicism over attempts to establish adult education: as the Telegraph complained,

any proposal emanating from the middle classes  
is viewed with a jealous eye, and an inner

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<sup>1</sup>Portsea and I.o.W. Advocate, 13 Dec. 1847; Portsmouth Times, 30 Mar. 1850; Mining Journal, 17 Nov. 1849; Practical Mechanics' Journal, iii, 1850, p. 46; H.T., 27 Nov. 1852, 21 July 1860; P.R.O. BT 41/572 shows that the founders were Andrew Murray, Engineer; William B. Lambert, Assistant Chief Engineer; and James Spence, Foreman of the Steam Factory.

motive is supposed to be concealed in the outward profession 1.

What can be said of the bourgeois groups who controlled elementary education? Lest we get a picture of massed ranks of vicars, businessmen, ladies and others, foaming at the mouth in their eagerness to indoctrinate the poor, it is worth making one or two qualifications at the outset. Only a minority of the bourgeoisie gave financial aid at any time to the schools, and a bare handful did the actual day-to-day organizing. It was often difficult to get a quorum to attend committee meetings. Some individuals, moreover, supported more than one institution: of the 129 subscribers to the Lancasterian school in 1831, for instance, 28 also gave money to at least one of the National Schools. Hostility to education, and even fears about its possible consequences, were rarely expressed after about 1820<sup>2</sup>, and it is probably safe to assume that most members of the local bourgeoisie were in favour of it. They were not however convinced that they personally ought to take any action over it.

Supporters and subscribers were likely to be found among those who saw themselves as natural community leaders:

when we watch the little objects of our bounty through the various grades of the school, and follow them as they become heads of families, diffusing a moral influence around their respective habitations, as a result of the instruction given; it is then that we are made sensible of its extensive advantages.

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<sup>1</sup>Council Minutes, P.C.R.O. CM 1/4 and 5, 7, 21 May 1860, 22 Nov. 1869; H.T., 31 Dec. 1853, 9 June 1860, 24 Nov., 18 Dec. 1869.

<sup>2</sup>The last such case to my knowledge was in H.T., 16 June 1817.

The leading citizens were generally to be found among the subscribers. John Bonham Carter, for instance, gave two guineas each to the Lancasterian Institute, the Portsea National School and the Portsmouth National School. Daniel Howard was treasurer of the Lancasterian Institute between 1823 and 1850. Edward Carter gave one guinea each to the two main National Schools, as well as the Lancasterian Institute; he was on the latter's committee from 1826 until his death in 1850. Sir Francis Baring gave money to the two main National Schools, and the Lancasterian Institute, although as an Anglican his donation to the former was double that to the nonconformist school. Perhaps the Southsea business group was less likely to subscribe: Thomas Ellis Owen, for instance, may well have supported schools in the Southsea area, but did not give anything to those in the old towns.

The involvement of political and social leaders in the schools meant that the committees might be dominated by the Whigs, during the Reform years. Paradoxically, this may have been truer of the National than the Lancasterian school, for the latter was subject to challenges from radicals. The committee of the Portsmouth N.S. consisted of the liberal Vicar (Henville), James Loe (who voted for Carter and Baring in 1835), William Harrison of the Telegraph, and the parish officers. The officers of the Lancasterian School included Howard and Edward Carter, together with Erasmus Jackson (borough chamberlain), and the radicals D.B. Price and

TABLE SEVEN: SOME OCCUPATIONAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBSCRIBERS TO TWO EDUCATIONAL CHARITIES, 1830 AND 1850

(a) Occupational Background:

	Portsmouth N.S. 1831 %	Portsmouth N.S. 1851 %	Lancas- terian Inst. 1830 %	Lancas- terian Inst. 1850 %
Retailers	30	25	35	42
Manufacturers*	19	12	29	27
Professionals	15	16	14	18
Merchants, bankers	8	10	4	2
Gentlemen, property	4	10	3	8
Dockyard officers	0	0	2	2
Army, navy officers	6	5	1	1
Farmer	1	0	2	1
Women	10	15	2	1
Not known	8	8	8	9

(b) Place of residence:

St Thomas's	82	76	45	11
Portsea town	3	1	38	60
Landport	1	1	6	18
Southsea	2	5	6	14
Rural districts**	2	1	2	3
Elsewhere***	2	4	1	6
Not known	8	13	2	0

\*including builders

\*\* i.e. rural parts of Portsea Island

\*\*\* predominantly London.

Source: Annual Reports.

William Bilton. The Portsea National School Committee, on the other hand, contained a number of naval officers, and even two known Tories.

Table Six gives details of subscribers to the leading educational charities, the Portsmouth National School and

the Lancasterian Institute. The Table suggests enormous disparity between availability of financial resources and willingness to subscribe. Both charities relied overwhelmingly on the cash of shopkeepers and manufacturers; two of the wealthy groups in the town - the 'gentry' and retired single women - hardly bothered to touch the local schools, if these examples are any guide<sup>1</sup>. More than anyone else, the retail sector of the economy helped keep the schools alive. Perhaps this is linked to the unusual size of this sector in an area which possessed a mass consumer market; also to the need, albeit limited, of retailers for a literate, numerate and obliging workforce.

There was, however, one exception to the trend: the Seamens and Marines' Orphan School. Founded in 1834 in St George's Square, this school combined three of the favourite objects of Victorian philanthropists: children, sailors, and dramatic death. In 1843 the School still retained a predominantly civilian management, with William Bilton and Edward Casher among the committee members; one was Andrew Murray, the Yard engineer. On the whole, army and navy officers took little interest in the education of townchildren, even when they had retired to live permanently in the area. As for those who were posted to the town, apart from the heads of departments, little was to be expected of them. As the Vicar of St Thomas's wrote to the National Society, 'the official

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<sup>1</sup>Dockyard officers would have subscribed to National Schools, if anywhere, in Portsea.

persons who temporarily inhabit' Portsmouth 'always consider themselves (to use their own term) "birds of passage" - and if they give at all to the support of our institutions, limit their contributions accordingly'<sup>1</sup>.

By the 1850s it is possible that bourgeois interest in education was declining. The Portsmouth National School, with over 110 subscribers in the late 1820s, had about 95 by 1850; the amount subscribed had fallen from over £105 to under £85. Indeed, although the school's activities had been extended, total income in the 1840s never reached the peak it had achieved during the reform crisis of 1830-32. The case of the Lancasterian school was even worse: for the first four years of its existence, it had over three hundred subscribers; by 1830 there were about 180; by 1850 there were just 150; as Table Six (b) suggests, many were the small masters and traders of Portsea, with few of the more affluent men of St Thomas's that had subscribed in 1830. The average individual subscription fell during this period, too: from around 15s. in the 1820s to just over 7s. by 1850<sup>2</sup>.

To compensate for the decline in subscriptions there was a variety of newer alternative sources of income. First, there were the children's pence; there was the Privy Council's grant from the 1830s; the school could organize dances or bazaars to raise funds, or let the school rooms to other organizations. The first two sources were the most reliable,

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<sup>1</sup>National Society Archives, Letters from Portsmouth Infant School, 21 Dec. 1844.

<sup>2</sup>Of course the number of (competing) schools was rising, but against this can be set the rise in population.



and both gave some degree of leverage over school policy to other persons. The Privy Council grant brought an obligatory inspection, while the school pence gave the schools an incentive not to upset parents into withdrawing their children. Both discouraged parents from regarding the schools as private charity, freely given; rather it was partly publicly provided, and could be regarded as a right. This in turn might well alienate potential subscribers.

More important than any positive influence in alienating subscribers was the failure to attract new ones. Few of the respectable now regarded education as the one essential bulwark against revolution; rather, it became one more weapon in the armoury of controls, useful in itself, no doubt, but no longer so special as it had once been; it could safely be left to the parson, and - when the discussions over parliamentary reform became more urgent in the fifties and sixties - the state. The development of distinctive, select bourgeois residential areas - especially Southsea - meant that the 'catchment area' of many schools included few of the wealthy. By the 1840s, complaints like the Rev. Charles Stewart's were common (he had set up a school at St Paul's on the borders of Southsea and Landport in 1839):

The Inhabitants generally, excepting the poorest of the Poor, are Officers in the Public Service with very limited means, Lodging House Keepers and lodging House Residents with no interest in the place, with scarcely any Tradesmen, whose support is much to be depended on...there is increased difficulty in keeping up the necessary amount of subscriptions.

St Luke's parish in Landport, said to have been 'wholly abandoned by consent', was not provided for until the 1860s,

in part because of the hostility of Charles Stewart to his neighbouring parishes. There was so little support for the Portsmouth Infant School that shortly after the passing of the 1870 Education Act it was decided to hand it over to the School Board, with no opposition from the National Society<sup>1</sup>. The archives of the Society for this period suggest that schooling was increasingly becoming the responsibility of the clergy; the subscription sheets suggest that it was increasingly the concern of those small businessmen who eventually took over the School Board.

How did the schools interact with the rest of the social process? The attitude of parents seems to have been that the schools, whatever their religious eccentricities, at least taught basic skills of reading, writing and measuring. One or two letters to school managers from grateful parents suggest that what these men and women wanted for their sons was enough education to enable them to become apprentices. When the Revd. Henry Moseley examined the apprentice boys of Portsmouth Dockyard, he found that only a quarter were able to respond to the question 'Write down your recollections of the circumstances of our Lord's crucifixion', while only one seventh could tell him 'Who were the most important persons mentioned in the reign of Henry VIII, and what were the principal events of that reign?' But a third of them could manage sums from the first book of Euclid. The Revd. E.S. Phelps wrote of the Yard apprentices that they were

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<sup>1</sup>National Society Archives, Letters from St. Paul's, Southsea, 26 Jan. 1849; from St. Luke's, Landport, 9 June 1854; Portsmouth Infants, 27, 29 Dec. 1876.

'of all the boys I ever met...the most ignorant of religious subjects.... (N)othing is thought of but reading, writing and arithmetic'. These were not children from the 'residuum', like Dickens's roadsweeper who knew nothing of god, but educated youths, training in one of the most skilled trades they could conceivably aspire to join. In many cases they knew little religion because that was what their parents had chosen, sending their sons to private schools where basic skills were taught - something that Phelps hoped the government would end by insisting on a period of attendance at a parish school<sup>1</sup>. This course of action was not adopted.

Parents, then, seem to have taken the things that they wanted from the schools: literacy, numeracy, a child-minding service. It is much more difficult to say very much about the values learned by the children during their periods at the schools. Children were expected to imbibe values of independence and self-respect; yet these were clearly double-edged. More important, children were expected to learn ways

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, 1850, vol. II, p. 824; Rep. Commission on the State of Popular Education In England, vol. I, Parl. Papers 1861 xxi, pp. 445-6; H. House, The Dickens World, Oxford 1960, pp. 32-3. It has been suggested that in Leeds, the religious component in schooling was made to give way to the secular as parents' importance rose; this did not prevent clergymen from continuing to play an important organizing role: S. Frith, 'Socialization and Rational Schooling: elementary education in Leeds before 1870', in P. McCann (ed.), Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century, 1977, pp. 77-80.

of behaving: arriving on time, waiting for the teacher to announce that it was time to leave again, not answering back, regular attendance, cleanliness, and so on<sup>1</sup>. These types of behaviour were functional in maintaining the social order, in a way that the content of education was not for the economy. Yet at the same time, the inculcation of such types of behaviour should not perhaps be equated straightforwardly with 'the reproduction of capitalist social relations'<sup>2</sup>. At least, not if by 'capitalist' we mean relations of subordination in modern industry, for the schools were as likely to try to reproduce archaic, residual attitudes and ways of behaving. We have already seen the stress laid upon domestic service as the ideal situation for girls, with the clothing industries depicted as a negative contrasting opportunity. If education functioned in the interests of a more stable society, it did not necessarily function in the interests of all the groups that went to form the bourgeoisie.

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<sup>1</sup>R. Johnson, 'Notes on the schooling of the English working class, 1780-1850', in R. Dale et al (eds.), Schooling and Capitalism: A Sociological Reader, 1976, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-2 discusses related issues with stimulating originality, but does not allow sufficiently for divisions within those bourgeois groups who could control educational systems.

CHAPTER TEN: THE POLICE

The extremely local nature of the nineteenth century state can, perhaps, be seen nowhere better than in the way that its legal apparatus operated. Although this period saw the bureaucratization of the legal apparatus, it did not see its centralization. The reasons for the one-sidedness of this process are not specifically located in Portsmouth, but in the far broader processes of urbanization and industrialization of British society. It is a commonplace that the growth of cities in particular led to the breakdown of older modes of direct personal control. The 'irrational' combination of terror and mercy was accordingly replaced by methods of control that were intended to be impersonal in operation and certain in their detection of offenders. Potential criminals were to be deterred, not by fear of the consequences if caught, but through knowledge of certain punishment when caught. If the personification of the law for eighteenth century Englishmen was the hanging judge, robed in scarlet and wearing the black cap, nineteenth century Englishmen came to think of 'the law' as a flat-footed, blue-coated bobby, plodding steadily round his beat<sup>1</sup>.

The crucial moment in the process by which a 'policed society' was formed was the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act<sup>2</sup>. This

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<sup>1</sup> S.E. Finer, The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick, 1952, pp. 29-30; D. Hay, 'Property, authority and the Criminal Law', in Hay et al., Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> And, of course, the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 and the County Police Act of 1839. Cf. J. Hart, 'Reform of the Borough Police, 1835-1856', English Historical Review, lxx, 1955, pp. 411-27 for an overview of the period discussed in this chapter.

Act, dealing with the problem of governing the towns that increasingly dominated most of the English landscape, added a full-time, professional police to the new institutions of borough government. Previously most places, Portsmouth among them, had been policed by men whose main occupation was something else; policework was part-time, and indeed was often undertaken unwillingly. At times of crisis, it was not the police who maintained order but the military or even the armed gentry. Other law enforcement agencies, such as the coastguard, had a significant presence in Portsmouth; for reasons of space, these have had to be excluded<sup>1</sup>. Instead, this chapter concentrates upon two groups: the police of the Dockyard, and those of the Borough.

Before 1836 the Borough was policed by a variety of groups. Responsibility was divided between the Corporation, the street commissioners, and private watch associations. The Magistrates appointed twentyfour constables (give or take one or two) annually; these were a part-time force, paid by fees for tasks such as attending the courts or serving warrants; they could also collect reward for apprehending offenders. Some held other Corporation posts: for example, the four searchers of the market, or the Sergeant at Mace and his Deputy. The constables followed a variety of day-time occupations, predominantly as small businessmen. Until the Alehouse Licensing Act of 1823 disqualified them, the

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<sup>1</sup> There is an account by E. Carson of 'Smugglers and Revenue Officers in the Portsmouth Area in the Eighteenth Century', Portsmouth Papers xxii, 1974.

majority were victuallers, and therefore responsible to the Magistrates both as constables and as licencees. Little wonder that the Mayor, James Carter, complained that the 1823 Act

would tend to remove men from the office of Constable, who had been for years most faithful and zealous in their duties, and whose services had been of great benefit in the town and neighbourhood.

The victuallers duly disappeared, although one (Isaac Wavell, a dissenter and landlord of the Wiltshire Lamb) stayed on until 1829 as Serjeant-at-Mace. By 1830 the constables were mainly small shopkeepers, or little masters in building or manufacturing: they included four master butchers, three master plumbers, two hairdressers, a master carpenter, fruiterer, filemaker, a saddler and a tailor<sup>1</sup>.

At Portsea there was also a night watch of eight men and two inspectors, who may have been from more working class backgrounds than were the constables. The occupation of one has emerged: Henry Hawkins, a bricklayer, who made his way into the columns of the local press when he broke a leg playing cricket<sup>2</sup>. In St Thomas's parish, as 'there are frequent patrols of military during the night, it was considered that the want of watchmen was not felt sufficiently to make it worth while to encroach upon the rate'. There were, however, two Beadles under the improvement commission, who were

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<sup>1</sup>Corporation Elections and Sessions Book, P.C.R.O. CE 1/16; H.T., 23 Sept. 1822, 28 Sept. 1829; Sessions Book, P.C.R.O. S 6/12.

<sup>2</sup>P.P.G. Herald, 22 Aug. 1830.

supposed to see that inhabitants did not dump night soil or otherwise block the streets, as well as hustle vagrants away. Lastly, there were the private forces. A private watch of six men at Landport, costing its subscribers some £110 per annum, left few records of its existence. There was also a Portsea Association for the Prosecution of Felons, apparently set up in 1820 or so, whose secretary was a solicitor; it may or may not have prosecuted any felons<sup>1</sup>.

Constables in particular were subservient to the Corporation, since the magistrates were effectively the resident aldermen. This meant that they were subservient to the Bonham Carter group, which by the early 'thirties reckoned to own some 70 of the town's 235 pubs. The constables' contribution to law enforcement mostly consisted of monitoring the pubs or carrying out whatever specific directives were issued by the Justices: enforcing licensing hours, stopping gaming on the sabbath, and so on. A lot depended upon the personal views of the Mayor: Daniel Howard was particularly hot on Sunday trading, while James Carter threatened legal proceedings against constables who failed to arrest 'common Prostitutes and Night Walkers'. The apprehension of criminals seems to have been a matter between the constable, the prosecutor, and the reward money. There was no attempt, as in some large towns, to seriously reform the local police. Indeed, there seems to have been some satisfaction with the administration

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<sup>1</sup>Mun. Corp. Commission Rep, pp. 806-10; H.T., 11 Aug. 1817, 21 Feb. 1820, 1 Feb. 1836; Sessions Book, P.C.R.O. S6/12.



of justice in the borough. Howard told the Municipal Corporations Commission that

even the greatest political opponents of the Corporation will do them the credit of saying that there was never the least ground of any complaint on that score....the Police of the Borough, on all ordinary occasions,...has been quite sufficient.

It was a boast that Howard had made before; he was not the only Whig to make this claim, and we can be reasonably sure that hostile disagreement with it would have found an outlet<sup>1</sup>.

A number of reasons can be suggested for the apparent complacency at the town's lack of protection. Firstly, it seems likely that criminal behaviour was limited in extent and scope. Most offences were fairly predictable, occurring in connection with the armed forces and the public houses. Prostitution flourished around Queen Street, the Hard, and on Point, as well as around the barracks. Thieving from the person was common. Occasionally a case would be so spectacular as to cause unusual interest: a ship's mate lost £100 in 1814, for instance, when a colleague persuaded him to part with his back wages on the grounds that 'as Portsmouth was a very wicked place, it was not prudent to carry so much money about with him'. After the war, vagrants became a major problem, apparently posing in 'the character of sailors'. Periodically these offences could turn into minor local industries; the Free Mart Fair, for instance, usually saw

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 17 Mar. 1828, 4 Oct. 1830, 11 Nov. 1832,  
8 July 1833.

dozens of vagrants, pickpockets and prostitutes landing in the Borough Gaol. The pubs always saw some disorder or illegality, ranging from afterhours boozing to strip shows. Again, such offences were largely expected. When the landlord of the Duke of Clarence was fined £5 for permitting fifty people to drink and sing after midnight, the constable reported that those involved included 'Sailors, some Watermen and there were some Girls of the Town'; the landlord could still find four respectable witnesses, including John Friend Pratt (a Tory leader), to swear that 'we have never heard any disturbances of any sort'<sup>1</sup>.

The records of the petty sessions do not, unfortunately, survive. Those of the borough quarter sessions do, and these indicate that a good deal of prosecuted crime involved acts of personal violence rather than theft or other property offences (Table One). Unfortunately, it is not possible to give any details at all about the nature of the 'Felonies', but one would expect the majority to be petty thefts. Newspaper reports hint that economic and urban growth were producing newer types of crime, but these were not yet of major importance. The unlit suburb of Landport was especially vulnerable (Southsea, although unlit, faced the town ramparts which were patrolled by sentries): 'Not an evening or a night passes but robberies of the most daring and aggravated description take place at the Halfway Houses

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 13 Mar., 21 Aug., 16, 23 Oct. 1815, 2 Sept., 16 Dec. 1816, 7 July 1817, 20, 27 Dec. 1819, 27 Aug. 1831, 20 Sept. 1830; Misc. Informations, P.C.R.O. 6A/4, 18 July, 30 Sept. 1826; Sel. Committee on Vagrancy, Parl. Papers 1821 iv, p. 217.

and its vicinity', reported the Telegraph in 1816.

Shops are plundered by ruffians in the very presence of the unprotected keepers, whilst at midnight they most daringly invade the yards, stores, and outpremises of the inhabitants, and often strip them of their entire contents.

Many such robberies were committed by ex-servicemen, like three sailors arrested in 1819 for burgling a slopseller's in White Hart Row<sup>1</sup>. They caused no long-term demands for police reform.

TABLE ONE: OFFENCES TRIED AT QUARTER SESSIONS, 1827-30

	Number	Percentage
Felonies	273	36.8
Assault	192	25.9
Not keeping the peace	195	26.3
Failure to observe bastardy order	34	4.6
Fraud, base coin	28	3.8
Riot	16	2.2
Keeping a disorderly house	3	0.4
Rape	1	0.1
N=	742	100.0

Source: Sessions Books, 1827-1831, P.C.R.O. S 6/12.

A second reason for continued tolerance of existing law enforcement agencies was the fact that much 'rough' culture was regarded as acceptable. To take Free Mart Fair as an instance, despite the presence of an expected level of

<sup>1</sup> H.T., 13 Mar., 21 Aug., 16, 23 Oct. 1815, 2 Sept., 16 Dec. 1816, 7 July 1817, 20, 27 Dec. 1819, 27 Aug. 1831; Misc. Informations, P.C.R.O. 6A/4, 18 July, 30 Sept. 1826; Rep. Sel. Committee on Vagrancy, Parl. Papers 1821, iv, p. 217.

criminality, the Corporation seems to have considered the annual fortnight's release as a boisterous, but tolerable amusement. The Fair was widely viewed as a limited period of licenced freedom; complaints tended to focus on times when the limits upon the licence were exceeded. In 1825 it was said that the Vauxhall - a sort of travelling dance hall - was a 'public place of licentious and indecent resort' which 'outrages the most extended view of freedom during the Fair'. The Corporation's main concern, however, was whether they could make the owner pay tolls<sup>1</sup>. The division between 'rough' and 'polite' culture started to affect attitudes seriously only in the 1830s.

Policing policy itself attracted relatively little attention from the community. The Carter group favoured government by consent rather than government by coercion; during the wartime bread riots they had refused to call in troops or police, preferring instead to talk to the crowd and persuade it to go home. Of the 192 assaults summarized in Table One, only 17 were against policing authorities of any kind (constables, watchmen and sentinels); since this type of offence usually carries high detection and conviction rates, it may be inferred that there was no great hostility between constabulary and community. With customers and workmates among the community, constables and watchmen would have been unwilling to transgress the community's norms about what was

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 11, 25 Aug. 1825; P.C.R.O. CC 1/3, 23 June 1825.  
The Fair was abolished in 1848.

acceptable and what was not. Offenders who were not known locally, such as vagrants, could expect punishment where a local man might get a verbal warning. Personal knowledge of offenders was expected to play a part in police responses: when James Way, a publican and Portsea night constable, arrested Thomas Lipscombe, a Queen Street draper, for ill-treating and beating a night-watchman, Lipscombe sued Way for placing him overnight in the lock-up with the other offenders. Summing up, the judge told Way that he 'was inclined to think, that however he might be justified in detaining strangers, he ought not to commit a respectable man whom he knew'. The jury awarded Lipscombe £10 damages<sup>1</sup>.

If there was little pressure on the borough authorities to reform policing methods before the 1830s, there was even less upon the Yard. The Yard at least from the 1770s had been policed by a combination of civilian watchmen and detachments of soldiers. During the daytime there was a force of full-time warders, whose numbers grew during the 1820s from 36 to 38, recruited from the scavemen and labourers of the Yard, and kept at fixed posts. At the head of the warders was the Yard Warden; prior to 1801 he had also kept the Yard Tap, but one of St Vincent's more effective reforms was to appoint a half-pay naval Lieutenant to the post at £200 per annum plus half pay. At night 80 watchmen, recruited from the Yard workmen, were allowed to sleep for two-thirds of their watch,

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 13 Mar. 1815.

standing watch in shifts. Both by day and by night there was a military guard; in 1814, this apparently consisted of 96 soldiers and 11 officers and drummers. The authorities tried to combine the advantage of a police force who had strong knowledge of local circumstances, with that of a force whose detachment from local connections and firm discipline would isolate its members from possible accomplices. In the words of Sir George Grey, there were 'two descriptions of Centinels who are not likely to connive at each other or at any depradation which might otherwise be attempted'. Despite the confidence of Grey, soldiers and watchmen did connive at times: in 1816, for example, the Yard pay office was broken into by persons unknown, despite the wide-eyed (so they claimed) presence of both military and civilian guards. There could also be friction, as in 1832 when the troops arrested a watchman who had not been told what the night's password was<sup>1</sup>.

Only one change took place in the Yard policing system before the 1830s, and that was the replacement of soldiers by a guard of Marines in 1819. Once more, the lack of demand for change can be related to a number of factors, including the nature of criminal behaviour. Perhaps most important, the Yard's security forces had been overhauled during the Wars.

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<sup>1</sup>Yard Pay Books, 1820-28, P.R.O. ADM 42/1377 - 1393; Yard Salary Book, 1822-32, ADM 7/861; Map, in ADM 140/555; ADM 106/1876, 30 May 1816; ADM 106/1888, 3 Jan. 1820; ADM 1/3298, 27 Oct. 1816, 9 July, 26 Sept. 1819; N.M.M. POR/K/3, 25 Aug. 1832; Warden's Letter Book (entitled 'A Plan for Guarding and Watching Her Majesty's Dock Yard at Portsmouth...1771'), Dockyard Archives.

Unlike the mass of civilian industries, the Yard had long been a large-scale unit, often handling extremely valuable materials such as brass or copper. As early as 1780 the authorities found that one Portsmouth receiver, Edward Brine, employed three smiths and a founder to rework government copper for transfer to London; in the course of a few months, roughly £1,400 worth of copper had passed through Brine's workshop. By the time of the French Wars, embezzling the King's Stores was, according to David Wilson, 'so universal and well organized as to constitute a criminal social system which extended so far as to include parts of the machinery of justice'. The question came under St Vincent's beady eyes during his brief period as First Lord, and security was tightened. By the time the wars were over, the decline in activity in the Yards meant that there were few opportunities for operations like Brine's<sup>1</sup>.

Thefts of course continued. Rope was coiled around the body or inside hats; lead and copper were stuffed down trouser legs or into waistbands; while one Extraman dangled 37 lb. of lead over a ship's side on a rope<sup>2</sup>. Declining activity in the Yard meant a decline of opportunities, and the level of thieving fell considerably<sup>3</sup>. Since arrests outside the Yard

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<sup>1</sup>R.J.B. Knight, 'Pilfering and theft from the Dockyards at the time of the American War of Independence', Mariners Mirror, lxi, 1975, pp. 219-21; Wilson, op.cit., p. 408.

<sup>2</sup>For examples, see ADM 106/1876, 31 Dec. 1816; ADM 106/1891, 3 Aug. 1822.

<sup>3</sup>Despite the absence of direct evidence, I am inferring this from the levels of action taken against offenders. During each year of the wars, on average 1.5 shipwrights were prosecuted; during the 1820s, only 1.1 per annum were dismissed. Since men could be dismissed on mere suspicion, it is evident that detections dropped rapidly, so rapidly that I believe the number of offences to have dropped as well.

gates were usually made by customs officers, the Yard policing forces were not directly involved with fences. The fences seem to have remained a problem for perhaps ten years after the war, but by about 1825 the most important had been identified and prosecuted. Take one of the most difficult cases facing the Admiralty in the area, the Darby family, members of which were first sent to trial in 1810 and only ceased reported activity in 1828. Five Darbys were involved, the father John, his wife Ann, and three sons. The 1810 trial involved the father and all three sons; the sons were acquitted, but the father, who had used his foundry at Gosport to smelt government copper, was convicted. Richard Darby (one of the sons) was convicted in 1820, but by 1823 was back in business as a coppersmith and brazier, in White's Row, Portsea; in 1824 he again stood trial, but since it was nigh impossible to find a jury 'at this place, totally unconnected with the Trade, or with the Def<sup>s</sup>. themselves', he was acquitted. In June 1826 Thomas Darby of Gosport, Richard's brother, was charged with possession of marked copper, but acquitted at the Assizes. The third brother, George, of Fareham, was successfully prosecuted in August 1826, and this is the last that is heard of him. Thomas was arrested in 1827, together with his mother and an employee (a smith named Richard Wavell) from the Gosport foundry; the two men were successfully convicted at the Assizes. The mother was dismissed by the court with a warning that her son would be made an example of; but Thomas and Wavell vanished before they could reappear at Winchester Castle for sentencing, and that was the last that was heard of them. Richard Darby,



still carrying on his business in Portsea (at 10, College Street), was eventually picked up in 1828. This time he was convicted, and transported for fourteen years<sup>1</sup>. One or two other major fences were caught (taking major to mean anyone who actually carried on a retail or wholesale business and employed workers to forge stolen metal); Thomas Hawkins, in 1819, employed two smiths to make nails out of Yard bolts; Francis Mitchell, dismissed from the Yard in 1813 and prosecuted in 1822, bought stolen canvas and sent it from his Spring Street shop into 'the Country' to be made up into frocks and trousers; Thomas Long, first convicted in 1799, together with his three sons fenced canvas, and was sent to the Assizes in 1826<sup>2</sup>.

External influences were operating to reduce the availability of routes for carrying stolen goods out of Portsmouth. The London connection, used by the Darbys among others, may have become more hazardous as communications improved and military forces were redeployed around the English countryside. Smuggling, which had provided the main rationale for both the London and the French routes for carrying embezzled metals, was also in decline, and the use of naval vessels to check small trading ships can have done the fences no good. In the longer run, of course, smuggling was to decline dramatically as legal free trade replaced the illicit one<sup>3</sup>. A fall in the

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 23 July 1823, 11 June, 30 July 1827; Reports of Trials of Dockyard Employees, N.M.M. POR/L/5, 12 Jan. 1824, 22 June, 10 July 1826, 1 Feb., 12 Mar., 28 July 1827, 30 July 1828, 11 Mar. 1829; Misc. Informations, P.C.R.O. 6A/4, 26 Aug. 1828.

<sup>2</sup>Reports of Trials, cit., 6 May 1826, 12 Mar. 1827; P.R.O. ADM 106/1892, 18 Sept. 1822.

<sup>3</sup>Reports of Trials, cit., 6 May 1826, 30 July 1828; Hants Chronicle 29 Jan. 1816; see also E.P. Thompson, Whigs and Hunters, 1975, pp. 157-8.

amount of pilfering in the Yard, then, occurred without any need to reorganize the police systems that patrolled and watched it. At the same time, small-scale pilfering continued, and may even have been partly tolerated, as a normal part of the Yard's activity. What was stopped in the post-war years was the large-scale, organized operation.

Neither in the Yard nor in the town itself did Portsmouth see anything before 1835 that made its inhabitants unbearably dissatisfied with existing policing arrangements. Some other towns did experience disturbances which drew attention to law and order. In the extreme was Oldham, where radicals had apparently won control of constabulary appointments by 1812, and went on to appoint men like Ashton Clegg, a reform activist described as 'extremely disaffected'. The Luddite campaigns and the trade unionism of 1824-7 and 1831-4 made their mark upon the northern industrial towns; in London and the south, the agitation over Queen Caroline was followed by Swing and the reform campaign. Sometimes the pressures could be very obvious; in Bristol, where before the reform riots of 1831 there were 171 policemen, afterwards appointed 307<sup>1</sup>. It was in this context of urban disturbances that the Municipal Corporations Commission started to take their evidence.

A government committed, however hesitantly, to what it regarded as cheaper and more efficient government was the agent of police reform. The establishment of the Dockyard police force in 1834 was only one of the series of measures designed to increase efficiency and economy in the Yards' operations, introduced by the cost-conscious Graham. The Borough forces were set up through an Act that was intended to replace the old,

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<sup>1</sup>Foster, op.cit., pp. 56-61; R. Walters,

closed oligarchies in the towns by elected, responsible government. Both Yard and Borough force were, then, political in conception. Yet the town saw none of the mass opposition and antagonism that swept parts of northern England as police forces were introduced - an opposition that, as Storch has shown, was based upon the belief that the police force was unconstitutional, and moreover, something that it was possible to get rid of<sup>1</sup>. In Portsmouth, when Beadle Matthews was replaced by the bobbies in St Thomas's parish, 'the cads, cadgers, costermongers and beggars of Oakum Bay celebrated the event of Matthews's cessation of power by burning him in effigy and having a grand supper of beef steaks and onions'<sup>2</sup>.

The absence of initial hostility to the new force was a by-product of the localism of the Municipal Corporations Act. The Act required the new council to elect a Watch Committee from among its members, and the Committee was to appoint a 'sufficient number of fit men' to act as constables. Unlike the 1829 Metropolitan Police Act, the Corporations Act made no recommendations about numbers, wage rates, methods of payment, qualifications, or even whether the force was to be full or part-time. The Act permitted a real measure of local autonomy, as a response to widespread fears of a tyrannical police state<sup>3</sup>. While it would be a mistake to overemphasise the differences between the London system, and that of the provinces, it is apparent that principles of local control, and discretionary administration, lay much closer to the heart of the provincial system than they did to that of the metropolitan.

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<sup>1</sup>R.D. Storch, 'The Plague of Blue Locusts: Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1840-1857', International Rev. of Social History, xx, 1975.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 19 Sept. 1836

<sup>3</sup>For fears of a 'police state' see E.P. Thompson, Making of the Working Class, pp. 88-90.

Many Watch Committees freely chose London as the model by which they judged their own efforts. Bristol and Southampton, for example, asked the Home Office to recommend a Metropolitan officer who might act as Superintendent. In Portsmouth the force did not possess a superintendent for the first years of its existence, and when one was appointed, it was in the face of some hostility. In Bristol and Southampton the new force was full-time. The Portsmouth force consisted of two groups: night constables, paid 14s per week and often working during the daytimes at another job; and day constables, paid a £12 retainer annually, keeping their existing jobs, and acting as constables when need be. Bristol recruited almost entirely from new men, Southampton took about two-thirds of its force from new men; in Portsmouth almost half of the borough force (thirteen out of thirty) had been beadle, watchmen or constables before 1835. Bristol abolished the gratuity system; Southampton and Portsmouth did not<sup>1</sup>.

The reasons for the differences between these three forces lie presumably in the fact that the men who came to power in 1836 in Bristol felt more threatened by disorder than did those in Southampton, and those in Southampton felt more threatened than those in Portsmouth. One consequence was that the Portsmouth force looked very much like what had passed for a police before 1836. Their occupations were much as they had been before the reform, and the most proletarian

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<sup>1</sup>A. Crookes, 'The Southampton Police Force, 1836-1856', Southampton Papers viii, 1972, pp. 15-23. Walters, op.cit., pp. 9-11. P.C.R.O. CCM 1/1, 29 Feb., 2 Mar., 24 Mar., 29 Sept. 1836.

constables were all among the nightwatch. The Watch Committee had even discussed the possibility of extending the Portsea night watch to the rest of the borough, and were only dissuaded by the cost. In St Paul's ward a meeting of burgesses protested that 'it is not necessary or expedient...to establish a Night Watch in this Ward'; these included a number of influential citizens, such as Alderman William Cooper and the merchant, Alfred Heather<sup>1</sup>.

The Dockyard Police also display elements of continuity. The Warden continued in charge of the force, with the same salary. Under him were three inspectors at £100 a year, three sergeants at £1 2s 6d weekly, and forty constables at 19s. - salaries rather better than those of the Borough men. Some of the officers were servicemen: a Drum Major and Sergeant of Marines were made inspectors, another Marine Sergeant became a police sergeant. Seven Warders were to stay on as constables, and the senior Gate Warder, Thomas Wilkins, was made a sergeant, on the grounds that he was 'well acquainted with the character of the workmen, and from long experience able to identify them when entering the Yard'. Similarly one of the Sergeants of Marines had been Master At Arms of the port for ten years 'and has a knowledge of the character of the persons in this neighbourhood who deal in Marine Stores'. There were discontinuities too: the new force was to be entirely full-time and to wear a distinctive uniform;

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 1, 22 Feb. 1836.

resplendent in cloaks and bowlers, a third would be on duty at any time of the day or night, in the Yard or rowing around the Harbour. The military sentries were to stay on, but in reduced numbers<sup>1</sup>.

The new police force, uniformed and full-time, marked a break with past practices, but not a complete break. The majority of men appointed were from working class backgrounds, and if Gosport Victualling Yard is typical, they were predominantly ex-Yard workmen (see Table Two). The Borough force, on the other hand, contained a number of part-timers, and its social composition was heterogeneous (see Table Three). In terms of personnel, both forces showed a marked degree of continuity with their predecessors, and this may have made them more acceptable to the communities that they were policing. There was less a sense of rupture with past custom, and correspondingly less of a sense that it was urgently necessary, or even possible, to get rid of the police. Nor were the Metropolitan force introduced to Portsmouth Yard at this stage, as they were in 1841 at Deptford and Woolwich Yards<sup>2</sup>.

There were, however, important differences between the Yard and the Borough forces. The Yard force was controlled ultimately by the Admiralty, but in practice by the Yard authorities; the Borough Force was run by an elected organization, the Watch Committee, receiving occasional directives

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<sup>1</sup>ADM 1/3435, 6 Feb. 1834; ADM 114/33, 18, 31 Jan., 8 Mar. 1836; H.T., 8 Apr. 1833, 4 Feb. 1834.

<sup>2</sup>P.R.O. MEPOL 1/38; 30 Mar., 2 Apr. 1841; ADM 114/33, 29 Mar. 1841.

from the Justices. The nature of the community being policed was in one case clearly defined and limited to the Yard workforce, while the Borough force had to police a large area with a diffuse and heterogeneous population. As a result, there was a difference in the functions which were expected of the two forces. The Yard force was expected, first and foremost, to protect government property, and the ways it was to do this were written down formally in 1837 in the 'Police Instructions for H.M. Dock and Victualling Yards'<sup>1</sup>. The Borough force, however, was expected to perform a much less specific task.

From the outset, the Borough police were expected to deal as much with cultural as property matters. The Municipal Corporations Commissioners reported that in St Thomas's parish,

We were informed by several inhabitants that watchmen were necessary; but the cause assigned by them was, not so much the fear of the commission of crime, as the annoyance caused by the disorderly state of the streets.

They added that 'the latter feeling is fully justified by the fact'. The Town Council similarly expressed concern that the role of a police force should consist in preserving public seemliness as well as preventing crime. The New Watch Committee was enjoined to consider

what measures should be taken to form an efficient police and watch for the due preservation of Order, Decency and Propriety, and for the Protection of Property within the Borough.

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<sup>1</sup>Horne Mss., P.C.R.O., 404A.

Of course, the order of the words does not automatically suggest the order of the priorities, but it is still remarkable that so much weight should have been given to 'Order, Decency and Propriety' as opposed to plain old-fashioned thieving<sup>1</sup>.

TABLE TWO: PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS OF MEMBERS OF CLARENCE VICTUALLING YARD POLICE, MARCH 1834

Inspector	Porter	1
Sergeants	Sergeant R.M.	2
	Warder	1
Constables	Sergeant R.M.	2
	Carpenter	2
	Tailor	2
	Labourer	2
	Convict Guard	1
	Waterman	1
	Book-keeper	1
	Shoemaker	1
	Shipwright	1
	Butcher	1
	Gardener	1

Source: Victualling Office In-Letters, P.R.O. ADM 114/33.

TABLE THREE: PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS OF MEMBERS OF PORTSMOUTH BOROUGH POLICE, 1836

Shopkeeper, Publican	10
Beadle	3
Wheelwright	2
Carver & Gilder	1
Master Painter	1
Journeyman painter	1
Journeyman bricklayer	1
Tailor	1
Superannuated from Dockyard	1
Labourer	5
Seaman	1
Not known	1

Source: Watch Committee Minutes, P.C.R.O. CCM 1/1, 29 Feb., 14 July, 2 Mar.

<sup>1</sup>Rep.Mun.Corp. Commission, p.813; Council Minutes, CM 1/1, 1 Jan. 1836.



Of course, it is impossible entirely to separate moral preoccupations from more immediate economic interests. Shopkeepers in Queen St. or the Hard might consider that they lost more income from customers who preferred to avoid the unsightly goings-on in those parts, than they did from theft. The Council certainly received more than one memorial from Hard shopkeepers who wanted police to clear out the drunks, sailors, relish-sellers, tobacco-chewing Yardmen, prostitutes, and so on<sup>1</sup>. Equally, we have already seen that organizations whose stated aim was primarily cultural, like schools, also regarded themselves as divisions in the war against crime. Daniel Howard even went so far to declare that Portsmouth's relatively low crime levels were due to

a moral influence, which resulted from the exertions of the various institutions that had been established, and are kept alive, by the respectable inhabitants of these towns.

Equally, participation in campaigns against criminality could be interpreted as ways of defining one's self, if only against a negative standard. Yet the consequences of the mixed preoccupations of the force's controllers were real enough. The beats, for instance, suggest that the areas of tension were twofold: those, like Grigg Street, St Thomas's Street, and Somers Town, where working class and middle class areas met and had their boundaries; and those, like Point, or St Mary's Street, where the immorality of the deviant subculture (as it was all too plainly defined) was most blatant.

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. Watch Committee Minutes, CCM 1/1, 31 Oct. 1842; CCM 1/2, 10 Feb. 1846.

At times when the poor and immoral congregated in the central areas, the beat system would be changed: when the Fair was held, for instance<sup>1</sup>. Storch has noted that in the northern towns it was the daily monitoring of popular cultural activities that determined 'the quality of police/community relations in the second half of the nineteenth century', rather more than their role in industrial disputes. The Portsmouth evidence confirms this view<sup>2</sup>.

The values which pinned the police's cultural role to their criminal functions were those of the town's elites - councillors, magistrates, and influential individuals. The police, however, were not simply passive agents of others. It has already been suggested that the policeman's own background was important in shaping the way that he saw his own role. The way that the force tried to operate was the result of an interplay between the perceptions held by policemen of their own role, and the way that the town's elites perceived the policeman's role. Although differences between the two sets of perceptions did break out into open conflict at times, it is likely that once both sides had come to form a set of stable expectations about one another's behaviour, a

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 4 Oct. 1830. Any truth in Howard's claim should be seen in the light of the town's multitude of policing forces, including nightly military patrols. H.T., 4 Oct. 1830; P.C.R.O., CCM 1/1, 23 July 1836, 27 Feb. 1840; S 21, 7 July 1842.

<sup>2</sup>R.D. Storch, 'The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880', Journal of Social Hist., ix 1976. Of course, there were not many strikes for the Portsmouth police to get involved in.

more conflict-free relationship would emerge. This is not to say that it was a consensual relationship, only that policemen's views would be taken into account by the elites, and that policemen would make an outward show (at the very least) of obeying instructions.

Initially, the force was characterized by a high level of open conflict, as both sides came to learn 'the rules of the game'<sup>1</sup>. One attempt to reorganize the force was passed over by the Council without discussion (who were afraid lest public debate should weaken police authority). In 1839 it was alleged that 'there was the utmost discord between the £10 constables and the inspectors' and the night watch. The men argued over fees, refused to carry out the less popular duties, and demanded compensation when they had to leave their daytime jobs to attend court; a number of night constables were working full-time in the Yard, and some were said to care more about their second job than about their police work. Some councillors even accused the men of picking on drunks rather than trying to catch criminals. A high turnover rate, disciplinary problems, and dissatisfaction within the force led the Conservative councillor Stigant to propose remodelling the force explicitly on Metropolitan lines; this the Council refused to do, instead disbanding the old force and recruiting a new one, consisting of:

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<sup>1</sup>A phrase used by Hobsbawm in the context of industrial relations: Labouring Men.

1 Superintendent at	£80 p.a. + free lodgings;
3 Inspectors at	£30 p.a. + fees;
3 Sub Inspectors at	17s weekly + fees; and
24 Constables at	17s weekly.

Twelve men and two officers were to be stationed in Landport, eight men and two officers in Portsea, and four men with two officers in St Thomas's<sup>1</sup>.

From this time, the force started to become a homogeneous and cohesive occupational community, with interests that could be different from those of the Watch Committee and Bench. Initially recruited from the petty bourgeoisie as well as from working men, they began to be drawn overwhelmingly from the ranks of the working class, and above all from the unskilled (see Table Four). Moreover, most of the police came from a rural area, generally within the Wessex region (see Table Five). A few were 'professional policemen' - that is, they had worked for another force previously, again mostly within the Wessex region, and had probably migrated specifically to join the police. The rest, however, might well have come to Portsmouth simply in the hope of finding something better than was available in the villages of Hampshire and Dorset. Once in the town, they found a post in the police force, where they stayed until they could find 'a proper job': young men, said one councillor, joined the force 'merely as a makeshift, for no sooner did they obtain a better post than they left off'<sup>2</sup>. Turnover rates

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 26 Oct., 28 Nov., 16 Dec. 1839; CCM 1/1, 28 Oct., 2, 5, 13 Dec. 1839. In fact these changes do seem to owe a good deal to a (selective) viewing of the Metropolitan experience.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. H.T., 24, 27 Nov. 1869.

TABLE FOUR: PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS OF MEN JOINING THE BOROUGH  
POLICE, 1850-70 (PORTSEA DISTRICT ONLY) AND 1860-70

(BOROUGH FORCE)

(a) Portsea District, 1850-70

	Number	Percentage
Publican, shopkeeper	0	0
Skilled workers	26	32
Unskilled workers	46	57
Seamen	8	10
None	1	1
TOTAL	81	100

Source: Portsea Station Record Book, P.C.R.O. 123A/1/4/1

(b) Borough, 1860-70

Publican, shopkeeper	2	1
Clerical	6	2
Skilled	96	31
Unskilled	136	44
Servicemen	25	8
Policeman	1	1
None	40	13
TOTAL	306	100

Source: Portsmouth Police Appointments Book, 1822-72,  
P.C.R.O. 123A/1/5

(see Table Six) remained high throughout the period.

In modern terms, it might have been said that 'morale' was low. Policemen were in the force for instrumental reasons, not because they believed in any ideology of public service, at least during this period. Yet they came from a common

background, and stood in a similar situation vis-a-vis the employing body, therefore sharing common interests. They had a sense of their own identity as an occupational group, expressed at the most elementary level by petitioning: for wage rises in 1841, 1846, 1854 and 1867; over Sunday working in 1842 and 1866. In 1859 the Landport men struck against an alteration of the beats, and in 1878 it was said that a strike was imminent over wage levels<sup>1</sup>. They developed a sense of their own dignity, to be defended against outsiders: when William Daw, master of the Buckland Commercial Academy and a subscriber to the Landport private watch, made some rude remarks to a group of constables, the aggrieved bobbies insisted that he repeat his remarks down at the station, deeply embarrassing the Watch Committee. They covered up for one another's misdeeds: Inspector Astridge was admonished for failing to report the fact that Inspector Abraham Lyon was drunk and fast asleep in the station, and there were several cases involving the constables<sup>2</sup>.

From the Watch Committee's point of view, such independent behaviour on the part of the policemen was equivalent to utmost disobedience, and was punished accordingly. Disciplinary offences continued to occur frequently throughout the period, and from the record of offences (see Table Six) what most worried the Watch Committee was any connection between policemen and drinking places. From an early tolerance of

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<sup>1</sup>See Watch Committee Minutes, passim; Monitor, 24 Aug. 1878; H.T., 1 June 1859, 5 May 1866, 6 May 1867.

<sup>2</sup>P.C.R.O. CCM 1/2, 11 Jan., 16 May 1848.

publicans among the force, there was a rapid shift to the decision, as early as 1840, instantly to dismiss any man found drunk ( a ruling that was, in the observation, generally relaxed). Twentyeight men were discharged between 1836 and 1854, well over half for drink-related offences; of sixtynine minor disciplinary hearings in the same period, twenty-four were for drink-related matters. This was not simply a matter of punishing drunkenness, but also of trying to cut policemen off from contact with what was increasingly seen as a potentially corrupting sub-culture. Ten Landport constables who were in the habit of giving early morning calls to lodgers at a Dorset Street beershop, were in 1850 admonished for accepting, in return for their services, a free dinner from the keeper<sup>1</sup>.

TABLE FIVE: GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGINS OF PORTSMOUTH BOROUGH POLICE FORCE, 1860-70<sup>2</sup>

	Place of Origin: Number	Percentage
Portsmouth, Gosport	31	10
Urban Hants	12	4
Rural Hants	87	28
Sussex	35	11
Dorset	29	9
Wiltshire	29	9
Other rural	29	9
London	10	3
Other urban	10	3
Ireland	6	2
Scotland	3	1
Channel Isles	3	1
France	2	1
Other (India, Wales)	2	1
Not known	18	6
TOTAL	306	98

Source: As for Table Four.

<sup>1</sup>P.C.R.O. CCM 1/2, 9 Apr. 1850

<sup>2</sup>One supposes that these figures are based on birth place, not previous residence.

TABLE SIX: DISCIPLINARY OFFENCES, 1836-54, PORTSMOUTH BOROUGH  
POLICE

(a) Causes for dismissals

Drunk on duty	13
Absent from beat	4
Drinking on beat	3
Asleep on beat	2
Embezzlement	1
Bribery	1
Neglect of duty	1
Not known	3
TOTAL	28

(b) Causes of lesser disciplinary proceedings

Drinking on duty	11
Inefficiency	11
Absent from beat	9
Taking dinner from beershop*	8
'Misconduct'	6
Insubordination	4
Asleep on duty	3
Drunk on duty	3
'Excess of duty'	3
Not reporting colleagues misbehaviour	3
Drinking offences off duty	2
Absenteeism	2
Lateness	1
Fighting a colleague	1
Not known	2
TOTAL	69

\* Incident described in text. The ten men disciplined included two 'supernumerary' constables, who are not included in these tables.

Sources: Watch Committee Minutes, CCM 1/1 and 2, P.C.R.O.



In general, there was no excuse for men found drunk. Constable Macarthy was, it is true, allowed to stay on after turning up to the station in a state of inebriety, but only by pleading his own customary abstinence as an excuse: 'having been out with a brother returned from abroad, and being unaccustomed to drink, a small quantity he had taken had taken effect on him'. Most drunken officers met with a more severe attitude: one ended a promising career after three months, having already been promoted to inspector because he was an outsider with experience, when he was plied with drugged beer<sup>1</sup>.

So far, it has been established that despite 'official' views about policing, articulated by the Watch Committee and the Bench, officers had their own set of perceptions and customs, drawn from their own experiences. Yet the whole idea of a police, as it emerged in the late 1820s and early 1830s, was the product of initiatives which were directed through the national state. Because of the weakness of organized opposition, as opposed to casual resistance, Portsmouth was less problematic for the state than were areas like Oldham, where the 'blue locusts' were the subject of political debate and action. Despite the Whig reforms of the 1830s, the state itself remained very much an apparatus held together by the strings of patronage and personal obligations. Intellectuals like Chadwick might try to push it into the role of a neutral machine, upholding the equilibrium of social harmony; but the strings of government and administration were often operated by the hands of the 'cousinhoods' - as Chadwick

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<sup>1</sup>CCM 1/2, 2 Nov. 1848, 15 Jan, 9 Apr. 1850; H.T., 4 Nov. 1848.

found out, at some personal cost<sup>1</sup>. In consequence, police authorities and reformers were open to the accusation of 'jobbery' at the best of times; often, relations between local provincial society and the central state could be worse than that<sup>2</sup>.

Government reports on policing, in particular the 1839 investigation, were influential at local level in defining the policemen's role, as was the metropolitan model<sup>3</sup>. Yet specific local relationships also have to be taken into account, and we have already seen that local conditions in Portsmouth encouraged a strong anti-centralist tradition in politics. Added to this, the local presence of state institutions affected the operation of the Borough force. In June 1839, for instance, Lord John Russell released an officer and corporal who had been gaoled by the Quarter Sessions for falsely imprisoning three members of the Borough force. In 1868 two army officers, arrested and fined for drunk and disorderly behaviour by the Bench, had their convictions quashed on appeal, for no very good reason other than the fact that the Home Office had just appointed a Conservative Recorder. What really hurt the local authorities about episodes such as this was that they publicly challenged urban middle class autonomy (in 1839 the jury were denounced by army officers as 'the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Finer, op.cit., pp. 116-48.

<sup>2</sup>The Dockyard police, it was alleged, were recruited along political lines: Rear Admiral W.H. Shirreff, Report on the Dockyards, Oct. 1846, N.M.M. SHI/6.

<sup>3</sup>The best account is W. Miller, Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830-1870, New York, 1977.

Israelites of Portsmouth' and the local newspaper as a 'pot-house Whig Radical' organ); they also undermined police morale and authority (the officers claimed that the police were given to frequenting brothels and urinating on the guard house walls). In the words of the Council in 1839, 'the interference of Lord John Russell is calculated to subvert the civil power'<sup>1</sup>. Experiences such as these typified relations with the state for ordinary policemen, rather than the abstract theory of a Chadwick.

This helps to explain Portsmouth's hostility to the 1856 County and Borough Police Act. The evidence taken before the Select Committee of 1852-53 was denounced as 'ex parte ...', comprising that of interested Chief Constables of Counties, County Magistrates, or persons favourable to their particular views'. Its conclusions were said to aim at 'the ultimate establishment of a national force under Military Organisation and central control'. Indeed, the Hampshire witnesses had been carefully selected to exclude all the larger towns, and the head of the Hampshire County police had been allowed to turn the examination into a platform for his own denunciation of the Borough police systems. Councillor George Sheppard quoted Milton at the County Chief Constable (one Captain Harris):

What more oft, in nature grown corrupt,  
And by their vices brought to servitude,  
Than to love bondage more than liberty?

The Telegraph echoed the theme: 'Great questions of reform may yet arise in the future, which a reactionary [sic] or a

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<sup>1</sup>CCM 1/1, 4, 8, 15 July; United Services Gazette, 6, 13, 20 July; P.P.G. Free Press, 11, 18 July 1839; H.T., 15, 22 Aug., 22 Oct. 1868.

government might designate and consider to be revolutionary, and they would try to repress popular demonstrations in their favour'. Portsmouth, together with York, became one of the centres of Borough resistance to the proposed centralization of police authority. Despite amendments that removed all the most objectionable clauses from the Bill, the County and Borough Police Act of 1856 was ignored for some years (Southampton even refused a Treasury grant offered, under the Act's provisions, in partial upkeep of its force). Portsmouth was not awarded a state grant under the Act until 1860. Nevertheless, the Borough resistance was important; the much-lamented fact that the State's definition of 'efficiency' was expressed in simple numerical, not qualitative, terms resulted in the compromise implied in the 1856 Act, that the autonomy of Boroughs was not to be seriously undermined<sup>1</sup>.

State influence upon the formation of policing agencies took three shapes: formal supervision, with little direct control, through inspection; initiating debate in certain directions through reports; and giving an example through the Metropolitan force. This latter was of importance in Portsmouth, since the Yard came under the London-based force in 1860, at the Admiralty's request. The force it had replaced was a rather unhappy amalgam of civilians with strong local connections, and ex-servicemen who occasionally tried to adopt

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<sup>1</sup>Parl. Papers 1853, xxxvi, pp. 8, 10, 25, 27; CM 1/3, 5 Dec. 1853, 9 Feb., 2 Apr., 1856; S 22, 6, 9, 11, 13 Feb., 11 Mar., 9 July 1856; P.R.O., HO 65/3, 18 Nov., 14 Dec. 1857, 26 Jan. 1860; H.T., 10 Dec. 1853, 24 June 1854, 7 Apr. 1856; Times, 22, 23 Feb. 1856. There is a useful summary in J. Hart, 'The County and Borough Police Act, 1856', Public Administration xxxiv, 1956, p. 405.

military discipline when dealing with the Yard workers. In December 1840 the brusque and insensitive way in which one of their colleagues was searched led to a major riot by shipwrights ending with troops clearing the men from the Yard. The search regulations, however, were altered<sup>1</sup>. From this time the military aspects of the force were reduced, and the Yard police were not particularly unpopular. Official admissions policy stated that 'preference is generally to be given to eligible candidates from remote counties, over those belonging to or connected with the immediate vicinity of the town'; but if the men working in the Yard on census night are a fair sample, more Dockyard policemen came from the locality than did the men of the Borough force (see Table Seven). When the Metropolitan force took over, a few of the old Yard police were allowed to remain, on condition that they allow themselves to be transferred to other areas within the Metropolitan district if need be<sup>2</sup>.

The authorities tried to cut off the Metropolitan men from local inhabitants as possible. Barracks were built or adapted for married and single men, and London-based men were transferred down as the need arose. As with the rest of the Metropolitan force, the police in the Yard were kept free from local connections, be it with the authorities or the community. This caused some ill-feeling: in Gosport, disgruntled magistrates refused to convict men who had assaulted

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 4 Jan.; Portsmouth Borough Reporter, 25 Jan. 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Parl. Papers, 1852-53 lx, p. 581; Police Commissioner's Letter Book, P.R.O. MEPOL 1/58, 28 Nov. 1860, 4 July 1861.

a constable in the Victualling Yard. A series of Naval Stores Acts were passed in the 1860s to clarify the authority of the force and the courts, and the Admiralty solicitor was directed to have cases tried in the Court of Queen's Bench rather than locally<sup>1</sup>. Although it has to be remembered that Metropolitan police were brought in from an existing outside force, they tend to fit the sociological type of an 'impersonal, bureaucratic' policing authority, set up to protect the property of a large-scale institution vulnerable to 'project thieving'. The force seems to have done so effectively: in his report upon the first year of activity in the Yards, Commissioner Mayne announced that 645 persons had been detected pilfering (compared with 65 in the year before), nearly five tons of copper recovered, 42 marine stores dealers had been convicted and 83 more had left the trade. By 1864 the men were bored; 'many of them desire to return to a Metropolitan Division'<sup>2</sup>.

What was the impact of public opinion, or so much of it as made itself felt? 'Unofficial' opinion had little effect on the Yard's Metropolitan bobbies, who were cut off from local life to a degree unexperienced before. The Borough force, however, was subjected to a variety of public pressures, since its controlling authority was basically an elected body.

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<sup>1</sup>MEPOL 1/58, 8 Feb. 1861; the Acts for the Better Protection of H.M. Naval and Victualling Stores are printed in Parl. Papers 1862 iii, pp. 492-504; 1864 iii, 183-7; 1867 iv, 497-501; Miller op.cit.

<sup>2</sup>Mary McIntosh, 'Changes in the Organisation of Thieving', in S. Cohen (ed.), Images of Deviance, 1971, p. 114; The Organization of Crime, 1975, ch. iii; P.R.O. MEPOL 1/58, 21 Dec. 1860, 7 Sept. 1864.

Fundamentally, we can speak of two types of public pressure here: that of the bourgeoisie and the popular response.

Although by no means inevitable, bourgeois instincts increasingly expressed themselves in the feeling that what was needed was more police. In particular, this feeling developed in Southsea, where italianate villas were concealed behind winding driveways and shrubs and bushes: no doubt this urban planning gave a comforting impression of rural gentility, but at night-time it brought the disadvantages of isolated country living with the fears engendered by the proximity of the urban poor. Southsea came before the Watch Committee in 1844, when it was decided not to take any action whatsoever; the subject was proposed in 1847, but no discussion followed. However, in 1848 there was a wave of burglaries in the suburb, or at any rate, it was believed that there was a wave of burglaries. One or two influential citizens were certainly robbed: Sir John Morris was one, as was Major Robb, while Benjamin Bramble's house was entered by a gang who sat at his kitchen table to eat a goose and some mutton before escaping. In April, four men broke into the house of a Mrs Linington in Brougham Street, and beat the elderly lady before they left with her valuables. The campaign to police Southsea was fuelled by these events<sup>1</sup>.

However, despite the involvement of the Mayor (T.E. Owen, of course) in the campaign for a police station at Southsea,

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<sup>1</sup>These events were even reported in the Winchester press: see the Hants Chronicle, 1, 15 Jan., 26 Feb., 4 Mar., 29 Apr. 1848; Portsea and I.O.W. Advocate, 27 Nov. 1847.

the Council advised the residents to buy gas lamps. 'Look at the modest request that is made', inveighed the veteran radical, William Bilton; 'it is that the poor ratepayers are to be taxed merely to protect the plate and wine of the rich inhabitants of Southsea'. Even the burglary at Mrs Linington's could not persuade the Council to build a station in the suburb; there was something of a row, in which the superintendent resigned, and was replaced by Councillor William Leggatt, and the force was disbanded. Three extra men were posted to the Southsea district, nine fewer than demanded<sup>1</sup>. The 'plate and wine' of Southsea remained without a police station until 1874.

Other bourgeois campaigns about the force tended to take the alleged under-policing of a given area as their rallying-flag. Camber coal merchants won extra attention for the Town Quay after it was complained that coal-stealing was the full-time occupation of several men and boys. The baptist chapel and synagogue in the brothel-infested White's Row got a constable every Sunday to protect their congregations against 'persons of dissolute habits assembling and using offensive language' (a similar request from St Jude's church, Southsea, was met with a demand for payment). Or private watchmen could be made constables with legal authorities: for example, the 'johnnies' stationed on the Glacis to stop boys frightening the cattle,

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<sup>1</sup>CCM 1/2, 12 Mar., 16 May, 3 July 1848; H.T., 1 Jan., 11, 25 Mar. 1848.



or the private police on the piers<sup>1</sup>. The police response to organized campaigns by 'respectable' public opinion, then, was generally accommodating, provided it cost little. If Southsea was not accommodated so easily, that was because only in the 1860s had relations within the bourgeoisie changed enough for trading groups to consider adding to the rates to assist rentier groups, rather than to any detectable change in crime patterns.

How did the local populace respond to the emergence of uniformed peelers on the streets? Although there were no riots against the force, there was from 1839 a recognition that the new force did represent a threat. The significant change, in radical eyes, was the decision to appoint an army officer, Captain Elliott, as Superintendent. David Brent Price broke with the dominant Whig group on this issue; when the Telegraph refused to print his letter denouncing Elliott, he went ahead and published it in his own unstamped Semaphore: in particular, he wanted to know

whether a man trained up to military, implicit, unreasoning obedience, familiarized from his youth to drum-head law, and to the cat-of-nine-tails clotted with human gore, is fit for a civil office requiring the utmost forbearance and discretion, and the most cautious regard to the rights and feelings of the citizens of a free country.

William Leggatt echoed some of these criticisms in the Council chamber, proposing that the post of Superintendent be immediately abolished (for Leggatt's appointment as

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<sup>1</sup>CCM 1/1, 19 June 1838, 18 May, 18 June, 5 Sept. 1839; CCM 1/2, 3 Oct. 1843; H.T., 18 Mar. 1839.

Superintendent, see p. 557!) Yet he failed even to win the support of those radicals who had earlier opposed Elliott's appointment<sup>1</sup>. The matter was also debated by the town's Chartists, who met in late 1840 to call for the abolition of the Superintendent's office and the reduction of the force's size. Dr Peter McDouall discussed the police during a meeting in the following June; what he had said was not reported but he so incensed his audience that after the meeting two constables and an inspector were assaulted (or so they claimed)<sup>2</sup>.

From this point the popular attitude towards the police seems to have been an acquiescent, if somewhat uneasy, tolerance. Individual acts against individual policemen continued unabated, of course, generally following police attempts to repress drunken misbehaviour. In a handful of cases, police men were beaten up by crowds trying to rescue prisoners, or

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<sup>1</sup>Semaphore, 1 Jan. 1840; H.T., 16 Dec. 1839, 13 Apr. 1840. On 14 Dec. 1840 the Watch Committee was told by Elliott that Inspector Devereux 'kept a private cheque against him, in which not only the times of his visits on public duty were noted down, but also ... when the Superintendent had a visit of friends'. CCM 1/2. This might mean an extension of the political debate inside the force, for Devereux was supported by Price, and had applied for the Superintendent's job.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 21 Dec. 1840, 7, 14 June 1841.

opposing what they saw as harassment, but in general these assaults did not make up some sort of 'Custer's last stand' for a dying culture<sup>1</sup>. While police-beaters did in 1849 include a fair spread of occupations, those of 1869 were mainly seamen, including one Lieutenant, out for a night on the town (Table Eight). As elsewhere, when there was a fight between soldiery and police, locals generally took the opportunity of battering the police<sup>2</sup>.

These cases involved individuals or small groups; while most of the population probably had little love for the force, they could see no way of getting rid of them. Instead, they became something of a joke. At the Christmas 1863 performance of Dick Whittington, for instance, it was said that the young audience particularly enjoyed 'the mischevious tricks of the clown, the patient endurance of the "lean and slippered pantaloons", and the officious watchfulness of the ill-used policeman'. The bobby was a symbol of authority: officious, interfering and disliked, with luck he got his come-uppance<sup>3</sup>.

This chapter has tried to examine the various ways in which the policeman's role came to be defined, in an attempt to examine the place of the policeman, and by implication the legal apparatus as a whole, in the social structure<sup>4</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup>This seems to be Storch's view: 'Police as Domestic Missionaries', p. 494. Of course, may be I am too reliant upon the police evidence in these cases.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. A. Briggs, Victorian Cities, p.150, for a case in Leeds; for one local example, see the serious Queen Street riot of 1850: H.T., 31 Aug., 7, 21 Sept.; Portsmouth Times 31 Aug., 7, 14 Sept.

<sup>3</sup>H.T., 1 Sept. 1869.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. A. Hunt, 'Law, State and Class Struggle', Marxism Today, xxii, 1978, pp. 76-7; and the works of D. Hay and E.P. Thompson, cit. above.

TABLE SEVEN: POLICE BEATINGS IN PORTSMOUTH, 1849 AND 1869

	1849	1869
Number of cases heard	33	41
Number of people charged	45	43
Occupations of those charged:		
Labourer	11	3
Soldier	7	4
Tramp, hawker, tinker	4	3
Bargeman	2	0
Seaman	2	18
Marines	0	3
'Dealer'	0	2
Shipwright, joiner	1	1
Females	0	3
Others	5	6
Not known		3
Approximate nature of police intervention		
Pacifying drunk	5	14
Stopping fight	5	1
Quelling disturbance	0	7
Rescue attempts	3	5
Intervening in quarrel	0	3
Family conflicts	1	2
Landlord-tenant conflict	1	0
Resisting arrest	1	0
Alleged harassment	1	0
Not known, other	15	9

Source: Hants. Telegraph, *passim*. Note: since these are only reported instances from the Police Courts, they do not represent a total of cases, or even a total of those which ended up in the police court, but only of those cases which got into the paper.

position of the police as a whole is hard to generalize about, partly because the two forces (Borough, and Dockyard) show markedly different patterns, and partly because both forces were constantly changing. Of course, both acted to defend the status quo, but they could also act against the controlling authorities and in defence of their own group interests. Nor were they a simple tool of the wealthy, as can be seen in the refusal of the Watch Committee to support the erection of a police station at Southsea. At times the Borough force did become a tool of the wealthy, as it did during the Southsea riot of 1874. Its role during the Battle of Southsea, however, took place at the direction of its Superintendent and the Pier manager, creating much embarrassment for the Mayor and Watch Committee, whose instructions the Superintendent had disobeyed. By this time, though, the police had developed their own sense of 'expertise', and the Watch Committee could do little but expostulate with the Superintendent; to challenge his authority in public would have been to undermine public confidence in police expertise<sup>1</sup>.

The aftermath of the Battle of Southsea revealed the way that local radical leaders had thought about police-community relations in the town. Chadwickian notions of police autonomy were widely diffused: David Price has already been quoted as saying that police officers required 'the utmost forbearance

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<sup>1</sup>CM 1/5, 24 Aug. 1874. One recent study has emphasised the tendency of modern lay authorities to defer to the 'expertise' of the Chief Constable: M. Brogden, 'A Police Authority: The Denial of Conflict', Sociological Review xxv, 1977, pp. 325-49.

and discretion', and an ideal of a restrained, neutral force seems to have been commonly admired. The experience of the Metropolitan police in the town had probably heightened the value attributed to a force which was free of local bias (which, for radicals in the 1860s and '70s, meant bias towards the powerful)<sup>1</sup>. Since 1864 the Metropolitan men had been responsible for prostitution under the Contagious Diseases Acts, and despite a widely-held modern belief that these Acts were administered cruelly and unfairly, there is some evidence that the Metropolitan men attracted some of their opprobrium precisely because they could ignore the orders of magistrates and councillors on this sensitive issue. Radicals identified the local police as a part of the local power structure; the Metropolitan system, with its police force free of local control and its stipendiary justices, seemed relatively equitable and fair. Councillor Howell pointed this out in Landport at a meeting after the Battle of Southsea: 'If Mr MacDonald, of the Dockyard Metropolitan Police, had been on Southsea Common, it would have been a long time before he would have allowed his men to draw their truncheons'. Councillor Barney Miller, four years earlier, had drawn upon London experience to argue that stipendiary magistrates were more impartial than local 'gentlemen, after a life of successful business behind their counters'<sup>2</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. V. Bailey's comments on southern provincial legal structures in his study of 'Salvation Army Riots, the "Skeleton Army" and Legal Authority in the Provincial Town', in Donajgrodzki (ed.) op.cit., pp. 243-9.

<sup>2</sup>Howell himself favoured stipendiary J.P.s as early as 1854. Southsea Observer and Visitor's Directory, 21 Aug. 1874; H.T., 23 Sept. 1854, 19 Feb. 1870.

local political elite, however, continued to exercise authority over the force until the centralizing legislation of the twentieth century removed policing from the boroughs and placed it in the hands of the more remote county authorities.

#### APPENDIX: PATTERNS OF CRIME

A few words need to be said about how police and criminals interacted and what sort of statistics emerge, locally, from this interaction. Firstly, the Yard undoubtedly saw a long-term decline in pilfering levels, although the reports summarized in Table Nine do not seem to contain all known cases of convictions. There must have been dozens of unrecorded trials of Yard employees before the Superintendent, who was sworn in as a Justice. Nevertheless, the pattern indicated is one of decline in thieving rates, which seems consistent with Fincham's picture of improving discipline.

A serious account of crime in Portsmouth will have to wait until somebody investigates the published Judicial Statistics, as well as other sources. My own picture is derived from casual impressions of the Police Court reports in the local press, and the examination of Quarter Sessions records for the years 1845-49 and 1865-69. There is some difficulty in comparing these figures, since a number of lesser crimes were transferred during this period to petty sessions: simple larceny by juveniles (1847, 1850), aggravated assaults on women and children (1853), larcenies valued at 5s or under, and larcenies where the defendant pleaded guilty (1855), all went before the magistrates during this period<sup>1</sup>. For what they are worth the figures are presented in Table Ten.

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<sup>1</sup>V.A.C. Gattrell and T.B. Hadden, 'Criminal Statistics and their Interpretation', in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), Nineteenth Century Society: Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data, Cambridge 1972, p. 358.



TABLE EIGHT: CASES MENTIONED IN THE VOLUME OF 'REPORTS OF  
TRIALS OF DOCKYARD EMPLOYEES, JAN. 1824 - OCT. 1855'

1824	17
1825	10
1826	9
1827	14
1828	4
1829	3
1830	1
1832	4
1833	4
1834	9
1835	2
1836	1
1837	7
1838	0
1839	2
1840	2
1841	0
1842	5
1843	4
1844	1
1845	4
1846	3
1847	4
1848	9
1849	6
1850	4
1851	1

Source: N.M.M. POR/L/5.

TABLE NINE: INDICTABLE OFFENCES TRIED AT PORTSMOUTH QUARTER  
SESSIONS, 1845-49 AND 1865-69

	1845-9	1865-9
Theft	469	326
Fraud, embezzlement, base coin	18	36
Violence (non-sexual)	23	14
Sexual offences	7	10

Sources: Sessions Calenders, P.C.R.O., S 7/1 and S/7/3.

Despite the overall fall in rates shown by these figures, there was a very slight increase in the share committed by more than one person, from 26.2% of all persons charged with theft in the earlier period to 27.3% in the later. This hardly justifies us in speaking of a rise in 'project crime', however. Some were simply petty crimes, such as the four boys found stealing potatoes and tried in 1845. The later period did, however, throw up a few more substantial gang thefts, such as the three spinsters, one widow and a seaman who stood trial for robbing John Smith of £72 and a silk handkerchief.

Can anything be said about the idea of a 'criminal class' that has so exercised some historians? Contemporaries did talk occasionally about such a thing in Portsmouth; the prison chaplain, for instance, described Wingfield Street in Landport as 'a locality where it is almost impossible to bring up a family well'. There were attempts to discriminate, in sentencing, between 'whether the prisoner were an accidental criminal, or whether he made crime a profession'; distinctions

of this sort were widespread<sup>1</sup>. Yet the occupations of property offenders suggest that stealing and similar crimes were indulged in by a wide spectrum of men and women. It is hard to identify a group who did nothing but steal to make a living, although it is possible that such a group did exist (Table Ten). In favour of the view that such a class did

TABLE TEN : OCCUPATIONS OF PROPERTY OFFENDERS (INDICTABLE OFFENCES ONLY), 1845-49 AND 1865-69

	Percentages	
	1845-49	1865-9
Retailer	1.9	3.9
White collar	0.9	1.1
Skilled worker	9.4	9.9
Semi-skilled	10.2	8.3
Unskilled	29.6	20.4
Seaman	11.9	6.9
Soldier	4.2	5.2
Marine	4.2	4.1
Vagrant	0.4	3.0
Manservant	0.0	2.2
Juvenile	3.3	0.8
Housewife	8.8	15.2
Spinster	12.1	12.2
Widow	2.5	4.7
Unknown	1.3	0.0

Sources: As for Table Ten.

exist, we can point to the rise in the number of vagrants committing offences. There is also evidence against it:

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<sup>1</sup>J.J. Tobias, Crime and Industrial Society in the Nineteenth Century, 1972, ch. iv. Parl. Papers 1851, xxvii, pp. 91-3; H.T., 27 Dec. 1856, 22 Oct. 1870.

likely candidates also included servicemen, labourers and casualised semi-skilled trades (such as fishermen, watermen, bricklayers), all of which declined in numbers and proportion. On the other hand, there was a marked rise in the number of 'housewives' who committed offences, possibly because of the consequences of the Yard's run-down. It is not clear how the Yard's fortunes would have affected women in particular, though. It is also possible that the courts took a harsher line with women in the late '60s than they had in the '40s. As for the vagrants, it seems that they became 'easy targets' for policemen who wanted to bump up their arrest and conviction records. Highly visible, unlikely to attract the sympathy of bench or public, vagrants (like drunks) were likely to be arrested on suspicion by a force whose knowledge of the area and community they were policing was limited. By the 1870s, it was being alleged that conspicuous 'marginal offenders' were attracting too much police time and attention; when one tramp received three weeks for having no visible means of subsistence, the Monitor was irritated:

serve him right, too, the mean, low, skulking brute, to fall harmlessly asleep on the road with an innocent comb in his possession, when he ought to have been actively and industriously committing highway robbery, or burglary, or something useful like that <sup>1</sup>.

Yet this can hardly explain the growing number of women appearing before the court of Quarter Sessions. Given the general absence of women from most other economic or cultural activities in the period, it is not surprising that fewer

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. M. Cain, 'On the Beat: Interactions and Relations in Rural and Urban Police Forces', in S. Cohen (ed.), op.cit., pp. 73-4.

women were engaged in criminal activities than men, and Portsmouth's figures seem to have been no higher than those of some other areas<sup>1</sup>. What is striking is the sudden rise in the number of wives involved, and for this I have no explanation.

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<sup>1</sup>D. Philips, Crime and Authority in Victorian England: The Black Country, 1835-1860, 1977, pp. 147-9.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: ATTEMPTS AT MORAL REFORM

One of the strongest themes of Victorian Britain is the fear, disgust and shame felt by members of the middle and upper strata at what they regarded as the gross immorality of the poor. Popular culture was laid under seige, as armies of moral reformers attempted to capture, shape, and tame it. Such attempts were not exactly an innovation: the Society for the Reformation of Manners had been active in the seventeenth century, setting an example to the poor through good behaviour on the part of the rich. As urbanization proceeded, and social segregation within the towns became more marked, fears that the mass of the poor might become steadily more uncontrolled and eventually uncontrollable grew more acute. Popular drinking habits, sporting pastimes, religious observance, sexual mores, and a variety of other customs, all came under the critical eyes of horrified 'respectable' citizens. Portsmouth, with its sailors, prostitutes and pubs, had a reputation for immorality and irrational behaviour that survives to the present day. Forms of social action, from schooling to praying were seen as possible ways of reforming popular culture<sup>1</sup>. This chapter

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<sup>1</sup>On the Society for the Reformation of Manners, see Briggs, Age of Improvement, pp. 71 ; see also the Labour History Society Conference Report, 'The Working Class and Leisure', cit.; B. Harrison, 'State Intervention and Moral Reform', in P. Hollis (ed.), Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England, 1974, pp. 289-317, and the same author's 'Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth Century England', Past & Present xxxviii 1967, pp. . Portsmouth's modern reputation, as described in a French-language tourist guide, is reported in the Sun, 27 Mar. 1978.

deals with only three problem areas, marked out for exclusive attention by public associations: popular irreligion; drinking customs; and prostitution. Other possibilities have demanded investigation, but (with some sadness) notes on Fairs, soldiers and sailors, and other edifying themes have been put back into the folders, unused.

(i) Religion

Although the English 'form a naturally religious people', a Portsmouth Catholic priest said in 1833, 'the number of those who do not believe in Christianity increases'<sup>1</sup>. Concern over popular 'profanity' was widespread: the Corporation told the churchwardens in 1819 and in 1822 that it had received numbers of complaints of the 'profanation in various ways of the Lord's Day', by 'Boys ... gaming' and other malpractices. In the late 1830s the congregations of St Mary's (Fratton) and All Saints (Landport) had to be 'protected by the police from various 'irregularities' and 'nuisances'. To the problems of indifference or even hostility from the irreligious were added the activities of dissenters: Portsea parish, refused a rate from the 1830s (see Chapter Eight above), could not even persuade the vestry to support a subscription to rebuild the crumbling parish church; St Thomas's had to hold a poll sometimes before the rate was passed<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>A. de Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, v, 1958, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Corporation Letter Book, P.C.R.O. CE 7, 9 Mar. 1819, 5 Nov. 1822; Watch Committee Minutes, CCM 1/1, 14 Mar., 16 May 1839; H.T., 1 Feb., 6 Dec. 1841.

Early concern over the inadequate resources of the Anglican Church had led to the erection of Landport All Saints Church in 1828, St Paul's in northern Southsea in 1820-22, and Trinity at North Street (see Figure One). In 1851 two events re-awoke earlier feelings of the inadequacy of Anglican accommodation. First in time was the publication by Revd. Joseph Wigram, diocesan Archdeacon, of his Letter on the Spiritual Necessities of Portsea. Wigram quoted widely from correspondence between himself and the Portsea clergy ((especially the Vicar, John V. Stewart, and his brother Charles Stewart of St Paul's), showing that the Stewart brothers had obstructed any extension of existing accommodation. Rejecting Wigram's proposals for four new churches and the release of pews in chapels-of-ease, the Stewarts had insisted that a Landport curacy (to be funded by the Church Aid Pastoral Society) should come under their own patronage. Wigram, in making his appeal public, stressed that there were only ten clergy and seven churches for a population of some 50,000; that drink-sellers could offer twice as much accommodation as could churches; that the upper class exerted little influence. This last disturbing thought was seen as a consequence of the fact that the

circumstances of the higher classes of the population have never been such as to make an adequate remedy feasible from the place itself, nor has it been possible that they should enjoy the influence and control which the superior members of society exercise with so much benefit in rural parishes.

The 'natural results' were 'Socialism, profaneness, scepticism'<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Revd. J.C. Wigram, A Letter on the Spiritual Necessities of Portsea, within and without the walls, addressed to the Principal Inhabitants of the Town and its Vicinity, 1851. Wigram's background is described in the D.N.B.



Wigram's disturbing claims were followed by the results of the 1851 census, in which religious attendance was enumerated. Portsmouth featured in the registrar's list of the fifty worst places for church attendance, along with Sheffield, Bolton and Brighton; only some 37% of the population were able, if willing, to find a seat. Although better than London's East End (where only 20% or so could have found a seat), it was bad when compared with the national average of 57%. Worse still, only one quarter of Portsmouth's population actually went to church on census day, and Anglicans could take no comfort from the fact that just over half of those who did go, went to dissenting or non-christian places of worship (see Table One).<sup>1</sup> Working men or women, if they went anywhere, seem to have chosen the nonconformists - especially the Baptists, Wesleyans, and Bible Christians; wealthier parishioners (judging by the number of multiple votes cast for anglicans in parochial polls) were mostly Anglican. The wealthy minority among nonconformists had declined since the days when the Unitarian Carters ran the Corporation and when the Methodists Jackson and Bilton held some measure of power or popular support<sup>2</sup>.

The early 1850s saw several attempts to remedy Portsmouth's spiritual deficiencies. The immediate response took the form

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<sup>1</sup>Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, England and Wales, Parl. Papers 1852-53, lxxxiv, pp. cclxvii - cclxviii. See also D.M. Thomson, 'The 1851 Religious Census: Problems and Possibilities', Victorian Studies xi, 1967, pp. 87-97.

<sup>2</sup>W.D. Cooper, op.cit., p. 9; cf. e.g. St Mary's Vestry, minutes, P.C.R.O., 26 May 1842 where those voting for a rate had an average of 1.19 votes apiece, those against 1.04.

FIGURE ONE: PLACES OF WORSHIP ON PORTSEA ISLAND, c. 1848.



Source: Post Office Directory, 1849.

FIGURE TWO: PLACES OF WORSHIP ON PORTSEA ISLAND, c. 1870.



Source: Post Office Directory, 1874.

of a campaign to build three new churches, starting with one in Landport - St Luke's. This church remained unconsecrated as late as 1862 because insufficient funds were available to provide an endowment or purchase the fabrics. In Southampton, ten new churches were built between 1837 and 1866, and two more were enlarged; in the same period Portsmouth, with a population twice that of its neighbour's, built only nine new churches. Asked why local subscriptions were so slow to come in, the Vicar of St Jude's was stumped: 'I am at a loss to give any answer'<sup>1</sup>. Yet a number of explanations are possible: first, there was less wealth in Portsmouth than in many towns of comparable size, and even then the ephemeral residence of some of its elites made them unwilling to donate to local undertakings. Secondly, the strength of dissent or indifference; in a wealthier town this might have stimulated the flow of funds into the established church, but Portsmouth's religious activists possessed few reliable sources of funds.

One striking feature of religious subscriptions is the high status that was apparently attached to them. The appeal launched by the Vicar of St Thomas's attracted some of the best-known names in Hampshire, not to mention Portsmouth itself, many of whom donated sums that were large compared with the guinea or two that went to educational charities. Table Two lists early donors of sums of £10 or more, together with a few remarks upon their social standing. While these men

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 14 June 1862, 5 Oct. 1861; A.T. Patterson, op.cit., vol. ii, pp. 66-8; R. Hubbuck, op.cit., pp. 9-11.

TABLE ONE: CHURCH PROVISION, AND ATTENDANCE ON 30 MARCH 1851,  
IN PORTSMOUTH AND SOUTHAMPTON

	Anglican	Dissenting	Catholic	Jewish
<b>Portsmouth:</b>				
capacity	12,230	12,922	601	160
worshippers	7,378	8,700	931	35
<b>Southampton:</b>				
capacity	10,181	7,251	450	77
worshippers	5,729	3,972	580	21

Source: 1851 Census of Religious Worship.

TABLE TWO: DONORS OF £10+ TO THE 1852 CHURCH-BUILDING FUND

	£
Board of Admiralty	100
Revd. T.R. Brownrigg, St Jude's (Southsea), son-in-law of T.E. Owen	42
Wardens and Fellows, Winchester College	500
Bishop of Winchester	300
Thomas Ellis Owen, landowner, architect, builder, councillor	105
Sir Francis Baring, M.P. for Portsmouth	100
James Biden, Southsea, master builder, landowner	100
Revd. T. Walpole	100
Archdeacon J.C. Wigram, Vicar of St Mary's, Southampton	100
Revd. J.P. McGhie (St. Thomas's), landowner	50
Sir Geo. Staunton, Leigh Park, M.P. (Portsmouth)	50
Revd. W. Thresher (Titchfield)	50
Grant, Gillman and Long, Portsmouth, bankers	31
Lord Frederick Fitzclarence, Lieutenant Governor	30
Portsmouth branch, Bank of England	25

	£
Captain Otter, R.N., Southsea	25
Binsteed, Mrs., ? rel. of C.H. Binsteed, lawyer and Tory	20
George Cutris, Landport, Corn and cattle merchant	20
Thomas Edgecombe, Portsea, Solicitor, councillor	20
Dr Chancellor Haggard	21
Edwin Jones, Southsea, landed proprietor	20
C.H. Binsteed, solicitor, Tory agent	20
D.M. Elwes, Esq., Stockbridge	20
Revd. E.W. Milner, Garrison chaplain	20
Revd. P. Thresher	20
Capt. H.C. Tate (R.M.A.), Southsea	20
Capt. A. Gordeon (Indian Navy), Southsea	17
Miss Harvey, Horndean	15
William Reeks, Portsmouth, retired Agent Victualler, Conservative	15
Ford, Richard and Henry, Portsmouth, solicitors, Tories, councillors	10
Gordon, Sir H.P.	10
Andrew Murray, Dockyard, Chief Engineer	10
Sergeant Gaselee, London, barrister, landowner, radical candidate	10
Dr Irvine	10
T. Jesson, Esq.	10
John Friend Pratt, Portsea, baker etc., Tory, councillor, chair of guardians	10
H. Porcher, Esq., Wingfield	10
James Smith, Southsea, owner of steam biscuit factory, navy contractor	10
Mrs. T.P. White, Winchester	10
Miss Amelia Otter, Southsea, fundholder	10
Parish of East Tisted	10
J.H.C. Wyndham, Esq., Corhampton	10

	£
Miss Ward, West Cowes; I.o.W.	10
Revd. A.H. Slogden	10
Dr Edward J Scott, Physician, Town Councillor, Portsea	10

Source: Birket Mss, P.C.R.O.

and women hardly represent a ruling class, or perhaps even a sample of it<sup>1</sup>, they are clearly among the regional elite. They may well have sought to enhance their status, or defend an existing one, through subscribing. An example from a related area will show that thoughts of prestige were not absent from men's minds. In 1836 Thomas Owen, while still making his way in the town, offered his services as an architect free to the committee responsible for erecting a new market house. However, Owen requested that he be given a 100-guinea fee; he would then give a donation of 100 guineas to the committee. His reason for this complicated procedure, he told the Mayor, was that 'I prefer naming a sum as the vague offer of gratuitous professional services is but little thought of'. The social cachet attached to seeing one's name on a subscription list, with a suitable sum alongside it, was an important consideration. Moreover, in Owen's case, there was some need to be seen supporting the Church, for Wigram had accused him of building a church in Southsea merely to enhance the value of his extensive personal property. On top of this, Owen was hoping to become Mayor<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>As seems to be the implication in Crossick, Ph.D., pp.146-8, where an analogous subscribers' list is taken as a reasonable guide to the social composition of a local 'middle class'.

<sup>2</sup>Wigram, op.cit.; P.C.R.O. CC 2/3, 22 Mar. 1836.

Considering the prestige attached to religious subscriptions, the striking thing about the 1852 list is that many high subscribers were not local notables. Most of the funds came from outside town: from London, or from small-town or rural Hampshire. Many local subscribers were from the Southsea elite, or were Tory professional men like Ford and Binstead. The contribution of local businessmen is remarkably small. Often dissenters, already resentful about the rates, disgusted by government's refusal to pay rates on its local property, the businessmen of Landport and Portsea rarely took kindly to appeals for funds for the Church. The Bishop of Winchester roundly denounced the tight-fistedness of the town's inhabitants, yet there were religious, political and financial reasons for them to identify less with the church than with dissenter-led calls for disestablishment. The fund-raising committee had to direct its attentions to a national appeal:

While...the locality has been left...to grapple with all the evils of immorality and misfortune inseparable from a great port and arsenal; it has, at the same time, been deprived of a great portion of its strength, by the fact that about a fourth of the property on the Island, by belonging to the Crown, is exempt from the discharge of any public rates, and has no resident proprietor to make private contributions....

The appeal, to act as surrogate 'resident proprietors', may have attracted money from a few rentiers and naval officers, in whom elements of paternalism lingered. Nothing, however, could have compensated the church for the absence of one large anglican landowner with an interest in the town. Local business groups were neither rich (taken as a whole) nor anglican. It 'does not say much for the tone of christian feeling pervading the place', said a Bath evangelical, when he compared the twelve missionaries maintained by the Town



Mission of Brighton, and the eight of Bath, with Portsmouth's struggle to pay the wages of two. St Thomas's, indeed, had lacked a Domestic Visiting Society until the comparatively late date of 1831, and much of the Island's urban area remained uncovered<sup>1</sup>. Shortages of funds, patronage and disagreements among the clergy<sup>2</sup>, and the general isolation of active Anglicans among the town's elites, meant that no church or mission was able to be as active as it wished.

What was the popular response to these attempts to draw Portsmouth's inhabitants into communion with christianity? There is no evidence at all that the populace behaved as manifest disbelievers; very probably some sort of belief in god was a widely-held means of making some sort of sense of life. It did not necessarily require positive social action, like attending church. Popular attitudes towards the formal activities of the established church were likely to range from the devout to the simply instrumental - what can I get out of it? - or the hostile. Between them lay a range of more complex attitudes, difficult to penetrate for the historian, just as they were hard for the contemporary anglican to grasp or understand<sup>3</sup>.

Earlier attempts at evangelising through the St Thomas's Visiting Society were attended with some immediate success, in numerical terms at least. A few months after its inception

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<sup>1</sup>Misc. Records of Portsmo Parish Church, P.C.R.O. CHU 2/2C; H.T., 31 May 1862; H.D. Rack, 'Domestic Visitation: a Chapter on Early Nineteenth Century Evangelism', Journal of Ecclesiastical Studies, xxiv 1973, pp. 357-76, says that the growth point for these societies was the 1820s.

<sup>2</sup>See, for instance, National Society Archives, St Luke's, Landport, 10 Nov. 1857.

<sup>3</sup>H. MacLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City, 1974, pp.49-54, is a most useful discussion of the very thin evidence of popular religious attitudes. For artisans ---

the Society had some twenty voluntary visitors, holding 'frequent intercourse' with some 186 people. It was reported that after some initial difficulties, the 186 were generally attending church, were 'much improved in their morals and habits....and always express great pleasure at seeing us'. Yet 186, out of a parish of some 8,000 souls, was not a large number; nor does it take much imagination to connect the 'great pleasure' of the poor at the sight of the visitors with the 'private charity' that they administered. The more systematic efforts of the Portsea Island Town Mission from the mid-fifties were centred on Landport, and were even more disappointing in their results. The 1859-60 report, for instance, noted that the missionary was often refused entry to people's houses; some 3,630 visits had produced a grand total of two converts to the faith, nine persons persuaded to attend church, four children sent to day school, and seventeen children sent to a Sunday school. Greater and more persistent efforts slightly improved these results in the following years, but left the Mission in debt<sup>1</sup>.

The Town Mission, moreover, was moving steadily away from the attack upon 'ignorance' that had been seen as the main task of the Visiting Society, towards a critique of the way of life that sustained and nurtured 'ignorance'<sup>2</sup>. The

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The Journeyman Engineer T Wright, The Great Unwashed, 1868 and repr. 1970, esp. pp. 79-87.

<sup>1</sup>A.R., Portsmouth Visiting Society, P.C.R.O. CHU 2/26; H.T., 23 May 1860, 31 May 1862, 26 Jan. 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. A.R., Mission of the Good Shepherd, 1870.

indifference that at first greeted the evangelical was turning at times into open resentment of the intruder, and increasingly his message was seen as an affront. Two kinds of popular resistance to evangelising emerged: relatively spontaneous outbursts of resentment from soldiers or sailors and the lower strata of working people; and the formal, organized dissent or irreligion of radicals. There are plenty of examples of the first; for instance in 1860 a group of militiamen told one open-air preacher on the Hard 'that his discourse was all false, and that he was to have 30s from the parish for preaching'; then they chased him away with their heavy-buckled belts, and tore up his tracts. Services were occasionally disturbed by odd characters. The 'Circus' set in the slum area at the bottom of Commercial Road was constantly disturbed; in 1861 one offender, a Yard worker, was caught, and the incumbent was only persuaded with some difficulty by his working class congregation not to throw the man's family into poverty by prosecuting him. King Street chapel was disrupted by one John Ozzard Bartlett, who

rose, and in a loud tone of voice made use of the most obscene and blasphemous expressions, producing the greatest consternation, and causing the congregation to rush out of the chapel in the utmost disorder, as if the building were on fire. Several ladies fainted, and had to be carried out.

As late as the 1880s, when the Revd. Robert Dolling first walked down Charlotte Street, he was greeted with a shower of stones<sup>1</sup>. There was nothing especially anti-christian about all this. It was a repelling of invaders, and a judgement upon the personal style of most missionaries.

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<sup>1</sup>The 'Circus' was started in 1857 in a wooden marquee that had previously belonged to Hengler's Equestrians. H.T., 24 Mar., 28 July 1860; Portsmo Guardian, 27 Feb. 1861; Revd. R.R. Dolling, Ten Years in a Portsmouth Slum, 1869, p.18.

Rejection of religion in its organized forms by radical artisans was much more serious, although obviously less widespread. The foreman of the Yard building contractors in the 1860s, called Horn, used to denounce the Bible at open-air meetings on Southsea Common. Bradlaugh spoke on atheism in 1870 before an audience of something like one thousand, and by this time there was an organized Secular Society. Horn was a leader of the Secular Society as was a Landport carpenter named Ediss, who in 1867 had helped prevent the Murphyites from winning support in the town by physically driving them off the Common. The Society stood two candidates, both workmen, in the School Board elections, winning around 2,170 votes apiece<sup>1</sup>. For some members of the bourgeoisie, this group was far worse than Catholics or Orangemen, largely because of its politics (emergent lib-labism); the Times, during the School Board elections, expressed alarm at

the disgrace which would be entailed upon the borough by the return of any one or more of the noisy clique who frequent the "Royal Exchange" and affect Republicanism and spout sheer blasphemy under the cloak of "secularism" 2.

Yet this small group was still, despite its impressive vote in the subsequent election, very much a minority.

More important in terms of its impact upon existing church provision was the small tradesman group. This group was, as we have seen elsewhere, frequently concerned with the rates;

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 3, 17, 24, 31 July 1867, 20 Aug. 1870, 18, 21 Jan. 1871; Portsmo Times 12 Mar. 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Portsmo Times, 31 Dec. 1870.

the prospect of even half a penny a year brought droves out if that ha'penny was to go to the church. One example will suffice to describe this group's attitude. In 1863 St Mary's vestry heard that the parish church had been subjected to various sacrileges, including the theft of iron railings and the chiselling out of lead from headstones; £100 would repair the damage and pay for a policeman to attend on Sundays. The opposition, led by John A.H. Howell and Barney Miller, won hands down, with Miller ranting at the Vicar. When Jolliffe, the warden, tried to speak, he could not be heard above heckling (most of which concerned the desecration caused by his sheep, which grazed in the graveyard). The attitude of the small tradesmen was summed up by one Mr Gadd, who called out that 'The Vicar's income was £1,400 a year, and he paid his curate £129, and now spoke of his reverence for the dead'<sup>1</sup>. Combining the interests of working men and businessmen, defending their pockets as ratepayers, with religious sympathies likely to be closer to dissent than Anglicanism, this group regarded the church as hypocritical and greedy.

Religion is often taken by historians as a kind of paradigm of the way that nineteenth century elites exercised 'social control'.<sup>2</sup> Yet it does suggest certain problems for anyone who tries to apply this concept to moral reform movements. It is true that evangelists presented themselves to their

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 19 Sept. 1863.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hart, 'Religion and Social Control in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in A. Donajgradzki (ed.), op.cit., pp. 108-30.

public as agents of social control. The Portsea Town Mission A.G.M. in 1863, for instance, heard great praise of the London City Mission; 'but for its influence', it was said, 'England would have gone through all the horrors of the French Revolution'. I am sceptical. Whatever the missionaries may have intended, the actual impact of their work was confined to a tiny minority of the working class population. Many of those working people who did respond, did so less for theological than secular considerations. The Mission of the Good Shepherd, for instance, found that its most popular activities were things like the nursery, where mothers could leave under-sixes from 7 am until 7 pm; it also ran other sociable activities, relating much more directly to the realities of working class life than the purely religious aims<sup>1</sup>. If a functionalist interpretation of religious missionary activities is to be sought, it may well lie among the effects it had upon bourgeois self-images rather than upon the poor.

(ii) Drink

Drink was, throughout the century, linked strongly with irreligion in the eyes of moral reformers. Contemporaries blamed heavy drinking for crime, debt, despair, violence, poverty, ennui, laziness and irreligion, and Portsmouth was a notoriously thirsty town - a reputation it had held at least from 1609:<sup>2</sup>

Oh Portsmouth it is a gallant towne  
And there wee will have  
A quart of wine with a nutmeg browne, diddle downe.  
The gallant shippe, the Mermaid, the Lion hanging stout  
Did make us to spend there  
Our sixteen pence all out.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 6 June 1863; Rep., Mission of the Good Shepherd, cit.

<sup>2</sup>B.M. Add. Mss. 33,283, f. 84.

Turned into a semi-alcoholic by wine, beer and rum while afloat, the sailor celebrated his shore release from naval discipline in drink, until the money ran out. The functions of pubs, much wider anywhere in the nineteenth century than they are today, were even broader in Portsmouth. The drink-seller provided lodgings; he could change the bill in which the sailor received his back pay; he knew who were the best slopsellers to provide a uniform, as well as the best pawnbrokers to buy Indian bangles, Japanese curios, ivory carvings, foreign coins, and so on. The drinkplace also provided food, entertainment and women. What more could a sailor need? Whatever a sailor needed, and was not provided in the pubs, could be found in one or two areas such as Point and increasingly the Hard, where curiosity shops and pawnbrokers abounded. The sharpness of Hard tradesmen was legendary: one invented a preparation which he sold indifferently as a cure for toothache, repairing china, and preventing the fouling of ships' bottoms<sup>1</sup>.

Table Three shows statistically the extent to which Portsmouth was supplied with drink-places. They were, as Figure Three indicates, dispersed throughout the town, but with marked concentrations on Point, Queen Street, and the Hard. A comparison of these figures with those for Britain as a whole

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<sup>1</sup>For the functions of pubs, see B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Movement in England, 1815-1872, 1971, pp. 45-53, 319-27; also J. Rowley, 'Drink and the Public House in Nottingham, 1830-1860', Trans. Thoroton Society, lxxix 1975, pp. 74-80; 'Portsmouth Hard', Standard, 8 Feb. 1884.

TABLE THREE: PUBS AND BEERSHOPS ON PORTSEA ISLAND, 1784-1870

	Pubs	Beershops	Ratio to population
1784	183	-	-
1801	231	-	-
1835	235	-	-
1840	247	-	-
1845	241	-	-
1848	-	390	-
1851	236	360	1:121
1861	246	505	1:126
1871	323	554	1:130

Sources: Hampshire Directory, 1784; Brayley and Britton, The Beauties of England and Wales, vol. vi, 1805; Municipal Corporations Commission, Report, 1835; Hants Telegraph, 22 Jan. 1845, 12 Aug. 1848; Wigram, op.cit.; Excise Returns, 1861 and 1871.

shows that Portsmouth was most generously endowed: in 1851, for instance, there were 190 persons to every on-licence in England and Wales, but only 120 in Portsmouth. Even in neighbouring Southampton, there were fewer pubs proportionate to population than in Portsmouth, until the transfer of beershop licenses to the justices finally cut down the number of beer-shops<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the barracks had canteens which sold beer and (until 1848) spirits, so that soldiers did not even need to step outside the front door if all they wanted was to get drunk. In the Yard, smiths were expected to drink heavily, and sawyers were notorious boozers; they, and other Yardmen, could buy beer within the Yard for most of this period.

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<sup>1</sup>Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 313. Southampton had 130 people per on-licence in 1861, 113 in 1871: Excise Returns, Parl. Papers 1861, xxxiv, p. 566; 1872, xxxvi, p. 310.



FIGURE THREE.

Pubs and Beershops in Urban Areas, 1852.



Source: Post Office Directory, 1852.

At least in the early part of the century, heavy drinking was common, and even the respectable sometimes regarded drunkenness as quite normal. Rowlandson's depiction of 'Roistering on Point' can be seen as a celebration, rather than a criticism, of the drink culture. Mottley, in his History of Portsmouth, described Point in even more eulogistic terms:

whilst honest and hearty Jack is dancing with his favourite girl in the lower decks of a liquor shop, his respectable superiors are enjoying, aloft, in the rooms of a tavern, the fruits of their bravery, in that style of elegance their distinguished talents and characters so eminently merit. And here let the Reader observe, that no sight can be more satisfactory to an Englishman than to see the noble defenders of his country thus enjoying on their native shore the blessings of plenty and pleasure with which it abounds <sup>1</sup>.

The detail from Rowlandson's engraving, reproduced on p. 593, makes it quite plain what the 'fruits' were: prostitutes and drink. But would any readers of Victorian fiction - Pickwick, for instance, as well as the more germane (to this thesis) novels of Marryat and Meredith - suppose that all members of the bourgeoisie abhorred public drunkenness? In the words of Captain Chaumier, of all the seamen's possible assaults upon god or man, 'drunkenness was the lightest offence against morality'<sup>2</sup>.

Although widespread tolerance of drinking, and even drunkenness, continued, there was undoubtedly a change of opinion from around 1830. Evangelical and nonconformist campaigners were united in seeing drunkenness as a wilful denial of self-control

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<sup>1</sup>J.C. Mottley, op.cit., pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup>Cit. in C.N. Parkinson, Portsmouth Point: The Navy in Fiction, 1793-1815, 1948, p. 102; see also Marryat's Peter Simple, vol. i, ch. xi.

and an offence against true Christianity. Local urban social leaders, particularly during and after the reform years, felt more impelled to demonstrate their fitness for community leadership. Navy officers were under technological pressures to consider the physical and mental reliability of the men under their command, as to a lesser extent were army officers (especially after the Crimea). Civilian employers, too, seem to have felt that they could no longer tolerate existing drinking practices, and tried to encourage a more steady rhythm and a more extensive discipline over their workforces. On top of local features came nationally-based temperance organizations, loudly proclaiming drink to be the worst of influences upon the human soul and body, and offering a single, easily-grasped solution to the many problems facing society.

The intervention of outside organizations was needed before Portsmouth could set a tottering temperance campaign on its unsteady legs. This was the British and Foreign Temperance Society, a London-based body patronized by royalty, aristocracy and a number of wealthy businessmen (most of its ordinary members were, however, in Lancashire and Yorkshire). The tone of the propaganda was genteel, its favoured method of activity the public example set by existing social leaders in renouncing spirits. The Portsmouth and Portsea auxiliary to the B.F.T.S. was set up after a visit from London; its first secretary (Thomas Tilly, a Queen Street draper) and treasurer (Revd. John Neave, a Portsea school owner) were both Liberal activists, and the Carter group gave wholehearted support. James Carter (a customs officer and partner in the brewery) was the first President; Edward Carter,



FIGURE FOUR: 'ROISTERING ON POINT', BY ROWLANDSON: DETAIL









David Spicer, Daniel Howard and James Carter jr. all became Vice-Presidents.

As with later temperance reformers, the enemy was seen as responsible for many evils: 'directly or indirectly, three fourths of all the crimes and the poverty of the country', and so on. The enemy was spirits in general, and gin in particular; the aim was to encourage the working man to drink beer, 'that nourishing, truly English beverage which he may enjoy at his own fireside'. Unlike the London Society, these men were mostly nonconformists: fifteen of the eighteen officers appointed in 1832 whose religion was known belonged to one sect or another. Not one was known to be a Tory, and one - William Bilton - was an out and out radical. Four were merchants, six were from secular professions, and eight were clergymen; five were shopkeepers. Moreover (see Figure Three) they supported a number of other 'enlightened' voluntary bodies. This was very much an elite body, committed to reforming the existing social and political system, and seeing gin as another vestige of the 'feudal systems' along with political corruption. Not only the poor man came under attack, but also 'the man of business...the man of study' and other members of the upper strata. However, the B.F.T.S. presence in the town did not outlive the reform period, and when a Coventry clergyman visited the town in 1839 he found little interest in the issue<sup>1</sup>. Many of the problems identified by the B.F.T.S. as requiring action were now being

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<sup>1</sup>Account based upon H.T., 5, 26 Dec. 1831, 16, 23 Jan. 1832; see also H.T., 3 Feb., 29 Sept. 1834; P.P.G. Free Press, 1 Aug. 1839; Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp. 107-9.

handled by new, representative agencies: the guardians of the poor or the police, for example. And perhaps the B.F.T.S. (and related pressures) had had something of a success in reforming, if not the behaviour of the upper and middle strata, at least the outward show.

For some time, drunkenness as such dropped out of sight as a pressing social issue. It might be attacked as a by-product of other phenomena - such as the Fairs, or the religious state of the town - but for the time, it did not become an issue in itself. Of course, beer drinking made dietary sense, particularly in a town like Portsmouth where well or tap water was full of little biological oddities<sup>1</sup>. It was also profitable for the brewers, still an influential section of the town's political leadership. There was little change in popular tolerance of heavy drinking, which was rather a subject of pride and boasting. In 1830, a waterman in a Point pub wagered £5 that he could drink twelve quarts of best strong beer without a pause; his stomach accepted all but the last half pint. The only time that a drunkard was placed in Portsea stocks, the crowd threw coins for him to pick up on his release; the offender duly celebrated the end of his sentence in style<sup>2</sup>. The South West Temperance Union included only one Portsmouth man among its patrons, the advanced Liberal R.E. Davies, and its focus remained Southampton.

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<sup>1</sup>R. Rawlinson, Report to the General Board of Health on... the Sanitary Condition of Portsmouth, 1850, pp. 94-5; M.E. Hallett, 'Portsmouth's Water Supply, 1800-1860', Portsmo. Papers 1971, p. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup>P.P.G. Herald, 24 Oct. 1830; H.T., 6 Sept. 1856.

Even Brighton activists felt proud enough of their own achievements to come down to Portsmouth and complain about the apathy that they found (an apathy they attributed to the influence of the trade). The Working Man's Temperance Society could only gather 600 names for its petition against new licences in 1861, and the Bench ignored its appeal. The Portsmouth W.M.T.S. with its 250 pledges would have looked silly beside the thousands who signed in the northern industrial towns. Indeed, it is characteristic that the leading activist for the Society, one George Woodhouse, was a Yorkshireman<sup>1</sup>.

The only temperance organization to win much support in these years was the Band of Hope movement. Reaching Portsmouth rather late, within about five years the Bands had enough members for a Portsea Island B.o.H. and Abstainers' Union to be formed, attracting some 3,000 to its inaugural service. By October 1870 the Union reported nineteen affiliated Bands, claiming 1,221 adult and 6,767 child members. Their strength lay in their ability to attract children, to what was largely a recreational movement, symbolized for most of those involved by the great annual procession from People's Park, Landport, to a meadow at North End (loaned by G.E. Kent, a Tory Anglican farmer). Each July several thousand be-ribboned children, led by brass bands and followed by the adult, regalia-adorned Good Templars, marched around Landport, before setting down to tea, coffee, ginger-beer, ice-cream, fruit

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<sup>1</sup>South of England Temperance Chronicle, Feb., May 1863; White, Directory, cit., p. 100; Portsmo. Chronicle, 31 Aug., 14, 21 Sept., 2 Nov. 1861.



and pastries, listening to the brass bands, and dozing through one or two short speeches. It was an annual event of impressive scale, and tempting to children from the slums and back streets of the poorer suburbs. Unlike the early temperance movement, the Bands of Hope were largely run by clergymen (especially nonconformists) and working men. The 1875 procession, for instance, had to be timed to allow Yardmen coming out of work in the afternoon to get to Kent's field to help out. The Union president, indeed, was W.B. Robinson, Yard Master Shipwright<sup>1</sup>.

Problems of course remained for the Bands of Hope. Serjeant Major Haskett of the Eastney Band (which died out between 1871-1884) complained that 'they received little assistance from the clergy'. The Revd. J.G. Gregson wondered

how they were to keep the 7,000 young people on their books. The majority were under 15, but when the lad was old enough to go up the Commercial Road with a bit of clay in his mouth, and enter a public house, the influence of the parent and schoolmaster was lost.

Gregson thought readings from Tennyson and Milton might make a difference. Some members favoured 'teetotal buffoonery', and others insisted on dancing after the procession. It was decided that 'it was not essentially necessary that the arrangements connected with such an under-taking should be of a thoroughly tee-total character', when funds started to run short for the annual trip to join the Crystal Palace choir.

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<sup>1</sup>L.L. Shiman, 'The Band of Hope Movement: Respectable Recreation for Working Class Children', Victorian Studies xvii, 1973, pp. 49-74. H.T., 23, Apr., 26 Oct. 1870; Band of Hope Union Minutes, P.C.R.O. CHU 89/1/1, 17, 27 July 1875.

Instead, the rules were relaxed and 'the presence or patronage of some of the most influential of the Borough' were sought. Membership turnover was high, and attendance was irregular: from the 1870 figures returned by four Bands, it seems that only one member in five came to meetings. Even the Annual Tea Meeting of the Union 'had not in itself sufficient power of attraction to call a good meeting together'<sup>1</sup>.

Adults in the main remained unaffected by temperance activity. There were many temperate or teetotal artisans: in 1874, for instance, the Dockyard Fitters XI were soundly beaten by the United Temperance XI, suggesting a bond between the two teams. Yet working class temperance men frequently met with open hostility within their own communities. George Woodhouse was persecuted on Guy Fawkes night 1861 by a group of men who waved an effigy on a stick outside his house; the editor of the United Templar was seen off the Common by a group of artillery men. A worse fate befell Noah Wareham, an Oddfellow, Sunday school teacher, temperance campaigner and wheelwright, living in Montague Street, Landport. Apparently his temperance activities had offended the landlord of the Heart-in-Hand beershop, who paid some boys to follow Wareham home and 'tin-kettle' him. Wareham came out of his house to put up the shutters, and was stoned by a crowd; he picked up a stick

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes, ibid., 14 Aug., 13 Dec. 1872, 28 July 1873, 7 Mar. 1876; A.R., 1884, in P.C.R.O. CHU 89/2A; H.T., 26 Oct. 1870. By the 1880s, attendance rates had improved to roughly two-thirds of the membership.

and started to chase off the crowd, was stopped by a group of young men, and beaten to death. Five labourers, a hawker, and James Mitchell, the beerseller, were tried for manslaughter, receiving sentences of between six and twelve months<sup>1</sup>. Even the minority of working people who took the pledge were not always in good faith: one, Margaret Gage, had appeared before the justices for drunken and disorderly behaviour at least eighty times<sup>2</sup>. Resistance to temperance was widespread.

It is not, of course, necessary to revert to some kind of conspiracy theory about the pernicious influence of 'the trade' in order to explain the weakness of Portsmouth's temperance movement. There was, no doubt, pressure from brewer and retailers; yet generally these were offering a valued commodity to a willing market. The pubs developed new leisure facilities: skittle alleys grew increasingly common; there were occasional dog-fights; dance halls were an attraction, even in low beershops such as Paddy's Goose, Warblington Street<sup>3</sup>. Friendly societies continued to use the pubs as meeting places; there was even one pub called the Trade Union in Havant Street<sup>4</sup>. Music halls started to emerge from the pubs; the Clarence Gardens had 'nigger singers' and

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<sup>1</sup>Southsea Observer and Visitors Directory, 7, 28 Aug. 1874; Portsmo. Chronicle, 9 Nov. 1861; H.T., 2, 6, 9, 13, 16 June, 14, 18 July 1866.

<sup>2</sup>H.T., 12 Aug. 1865, 16 Oct. 1869.

<sup>3</sup>For examples see H.T., 20 Jan., 17 Mar. 1849, 5 Dec. 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Quote is from 21 Jan. 1865; for music hall in general, see Stedman Jones, 'Working class culture', cit., pp. 490-97.

so on, and was of course licenced; the South of England Music Hall developed out of the Blue Bell in St Mary's Street. Even the 'pure entertainment' of the music hall was well-meshed with working class culture as a whole:

The characters were two in number - one a nobleman from St. James's, and the other a poor man from St. Giles's. The character of a nobleman was represented by a lady in male attire, with peg-top whiskers (laughter) and the poor man by a gentleman clothed in rags. "Poverty" entered from the left, bemoaned his luckless situation, and said if fortune had placed money at his command, how differently he would have acted to the poor from the general run of mankind who possessed wealth. "Riches" then entered from the other side, from whom "Poverty" solicits charity, but is indignantly refused.

After more of the like, 'Riches' offers a guinea, which 'Poverty' turns down for fear of coming under the eye of the law. The playlet ended with 'Riches' promising to think more kindly of the poor<sup>1</sup>.

Pubs and other drink-places remained very much a part of popular culture. The most evident change during the years after 1832 was that upper-and middle-class drunkenness either declined, or was confined to areas where its audience was limited, such as balls, dinners, and the home. The impact of the temperance movement upon working class and petty bourgeois drinking habits does not seem to have been large. Indeed, the majority of working men and small businessmen were either indifferent, or opposed to the organised temperance movement. The Revd. Mr Cullis felt the force of popular resentment when he spoke in favour of Sunday closing in 1863:

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<sup>1</sup>Account of Walter Williams, local comedian, giving evidence against the owners of the South of England Music Hall, who did not possess a theatre licence: H.T., 21 Jan. 1865.

Fellow countrymen - Fair play is a jewel, gentlemen. ("So it is, my jewel". "We ain't". "You're Irish". "Cheer up, my cherub". "We don't want any more of your melted butter"). Gentlemen, gentlemen, do hear me. This is the very first meeting the Mayor has attended since he has been inducted into office. ("Very sorry he has been dragged into it, for he's a good sort"). The Mayor, friends, represents you - you. ("Yes, but you don't; you'd rob a poor man of his beer". "We're very sorry this is the Mayor's first meeting"). Friends, hear me; we are going to give you silver for copper (Laughter and cheers. A voice: "Let's have it now, then") and not to restrict your privileges (Uproar). I will tell you, if you will only hear me, how you can quietly have your beer on a Sunday. (Cheers and "gammon"). You can get it on the Saturday night ("It's stale then - it's all stale"). You would deprive your class of great privileges; show yourselves to be Englishmen, and deal fairly by me. (The people shouted the speaker down, and concluded by singing 'Rule Britannia').

The Mayor - After the meeting we shall be happy to have a vocal concert, but not during the speeches. I must claim fairness.

Mr. Cullis - My fellow countrymen ("You said that before"), fair play's a jewel ("So you did that", "Go home"). You won't let me speak, and yet you have had more speaking than all of us. ("Rest quiet, Holy Joe").

The crowd sang 'Rule Britannia' and shouted 'Encore' until 'The Rev. gentleman could bear it no longer, and therefore resumed his seat'. A resolution expressing satisfaction at existing licencing laws was carried<sup>1</sup>.

Ebullient, patriotic, inward-looking and yet resistant to intrusion by reformers, popular culture survived this stage of attempted reform, as it had rejected attempts to provide

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 17 Jan. 1863.

libraries or churches. The town was sufficiently isolated from the temperance campaign's centre of gravity, especially in its teetotal stages, for even working men like Woodhouse to be regarded as outsiders (the local cooperators, for instance, were greatly intrigued by his Yorkshire accent). Geographical isolation from the northern industrial centres also meant that Portsmouth's working class had been largely by-passed by the self-improving political aspirations of the Chartists that had, not infrequently, been transformed into the moral aspirations of teetotalism. It also meant that there was less incentive for worried social leaders to adopt temperance as a method of social control<sup>1</sup>; nor after the 1830s were the town's major figures involved in temperance organizations in any numbers; the 1832 campaign was partly directed at fellow-members of the bourgeoisie, and took place in the midst of a political crisis, when self-definitions were important. There was little concern over drunkenness in the Yard, where work discipline continued to be based upon customs established in the eighteenth century. Labour customs were transformed in part with the shift to metal of the 1860s, coinciding with the appointment of a temperance man, William Robinson, as Master Shipwright; yet Robinson found himself powerless to prevent the sale of beer in the Yard canteens<sup>2</sup>. Few pressures, from

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<sup>1</sup>A.L. Gallagher, 'The Social Control of the Working Class Leisure in Preston, c.1850-c.1875', Lancaster M.A., 1975, ch.iii; Harrison, Drink and the Victorians.

<sup>2</sup>An interesting attempt to explain moral reform as a response to economic changes is D.A. Reid, op.cit. Robinson's views are in the evidence before the Sel. Committee of the House of Lords on Intemperance, Parl. Papers 1877, xi, pp. 114-20.

local bourgeoisie or Yard authorities, worked in favour of organized temperance; and left to themselves the publicans and their customers managed to resist attack<sup>1</sup>.

(iii) Prostitution

In the case of both religious provision and temperance reform, the crucial initiatives were made by local people, in imitation of organisations and movements that had been established elsewhere in Britain. In neither case did the state (as we normally conceive it<sup>2</sup>) play much of a part in the struggle to reform popular culture; rather, the task was left to private institutions, the state mainly confining itself to permissive legislation of one kind or another<sup>3</sup>. In Portsmouth, such permissive legislation often went unused. In the case of prostitution, however, the state did step into what was, de facto, an arena of cultural conflict where the combat had been underway for decades. Those who drew up the Contagious Diseases Acts were thinking primarily of the debilitating effect of venereal disease upon servicemen<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Apart, of course, from legislative ones. The transfer of beerhouse licensing to the justices in 1869 saw about 5% of existing sellers lose their licences at the 1870 brewster sessions: H.T., 3, 17 Sept. 1870. Cf. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> It is sometimes argued that the church, perhaps with the press, or trade unions or schools, is invariably a part of the state, no matter what the precise nature of their juridical relationship. (For an extreme version, see the essay by L. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation', in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, 1971). Apart from the extreme functionalism of such a notion, it also reduces a hypothesis (ie. that churches etc. can, at times, be state-controlled) to a law.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Harrison, 'State Intervention and Moral Reform', cit.

<sup>4</sup> There is naturally a whiggery in some forms of feminist history. The Whig interpretation of the anti-C.D.A. campaigners emphasises their standing as fore-runners of

Nevertheless, the intrusion of state agencies into an area whose problematic status had already been defined by established private voluntary agencies meant that the state (and those apparatuses used to enforce the C.D.A.s) was drawn into a fierce controversy over sexual morality.

Before the C.D.A.s introduced a mechanism for counting them, it is hard to establish an accurate total of the number of prostitutes in Portsmouth. It was suggested, in 1824, that during the Wars there had been 'at Portsmouth, Gosport and in the vicinity, no less a number than 20,000 prostitutes', though many had since left. By 1865, the year of the first returns under the C.D.A., there were said to be 1,335 'known common women' in the town. It was not only a trade that was demand-induced; it was plainly associated with the female labour market, for even those who found work were hard put to it to survive. The town contained plenty of amenities for those who wished to turn their bodies into commodities: either as wage-labourers for others in pubs and beershops, or on their own account, in premises as poor as the workhouse or the grassy ramparts<sup>1</sup>.

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modern feminism, which is in itself a reduction of an extremely complex group of motives. Even more balanced accounts have neglected the aims and intentions of those who framed the Acts. Recent work includes J. L'Esperance, 'The Work of the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History xxvi, 1973, pp.13-16 B. Harrison, 'State Intervention', cit., pp. 312-5; Daniel and Judith Walkowitz, '"We are not Beasts of the Field": Prostitution and the Poor in Plymouth and Southampton under the Contagious Diseases Acts', in M. Hartmann and L. Banner (eds.), Clio's Consciousness Raised, New York, 1974, pp. 192-225.

<sup>1</sup> An Old Naval Surgeon, An Address to the Officers of His Majesty's Navy, Dublin, 1824, p. 20; Portsmo. Guardian, 28 Feb. 1861; J.O. Travers, op.cit., p. 24; R. Rawlinson, Report cit., pp. 63-4; Watch Committee Minutes, CCM 1/2, 11 June 1850.



Once again, the attitudes of governing groups had to shift before any sustained campaign could develop. Mottley's comments (p. 590 above) suggest that he regarded the doxies as among 'Honest and hearty Jack's' well-deserved rewards. Not all the early literature on the subject was reformist; some was antiquarian, such as the notes in Howard's manuscript history on the Hole in the Wall in Battery Row. The Carters sporadically issued declarations against 'Night-walkers and other Common Women', but these were directed mainly against the contamination of respectable areas like Queen Street, and lasted only a few weeks. Attitudes seem to have become hostile only when 'freedom of choice' was interfered with and a girl was coerced into prostitution by other than market forces. Here governing group and populace coincided in the harshness of the response. When Martha Davis of Love Lane inveigled a Gosport servant girl into becoming a prostitute (Davis, a 'wise woman', had told the girl that she was to marry a navy officer), she was sentenced to imprisonment with the pillory, where 'She was Thrown at very much with Eggs, Potatoes, Durt, &c.'<sup>1</sup>

The first Penitentiary Society was set up in 1831. Although it received some respectable support (including Edward Carter, Edmund Dewdney, the Pratt brothers, William McCarthy of the Bank of England, William Grant, and John Deverell, the largest landowner of Portsdown) its meetings were poorly

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<sup>1</sup>D. Howard, Collections on Portsmouth, B.M. Add. Mss. 40,001, f. 121; Field (ed.), op.cit., entry for 5 Aug. 1813 and n. 31; H.T., 21 Aug. 1815; Corp. Letter Book, cit., 30 Oct. 1822. In 1814, one congregationalist was discovered to be living with a woman of 'Ill Fame', and expelled: King St. Congregationalist Church Book, P.C.R.O. CHU 91/1, 19 Sept.

attended, and there were disputes over its management<sup>1</sup>. By 1841 there were only thirteen women in the Penitentiary, in 1851 there were only nine. Its merits, wrote the Telegraph in 1850 after yet one more thinly-attended subscribers' meeting, were not 'generally understood in this important locality'<sup>2</sup>. The Penitentiary approach remained the dominant one until the 1860s.

Prosecutions of brothel-owners in the early 1860s were not confined to Portsmouth<sup>3</sup>. Local events had, however, drawn attention to the brothels: in 1850 rivalry between the two services in a White's Row brothel had led to a full-scale riot involving several thousand men, including many civilians; in May 1853 a regiment was transferred to Gosport when its members rioted in the White's Row area after a brothel fight; in 1856 a hundred sailors wrecked a brothel in the Row in revenge for an offence to one of their own comrades. These major disturbances were followed, in 1860, by the murder of a Yard boilermaker, Daniel Clewney, by a group of militiamen who were using the upstairs rooms and prostitutes of the beershop he was drinking in<sup>4</sup>. The prosecutions started in

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 7 Feb., 27 Aug. 1831, 4 Mar., 24 June 1839; the P.P.G. Free Press, 27 June 1839, said that Dewdney resigned because he was unable to win control over the society.

<sup>2</sup>Howard Collections, cit., f. 379; H.T., 23 Mar. 1851; 1851 Census Enumerators' Schedule, Waterworks Lane, Landport, P.R.O. HO 107/1657, book viii.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. B. Trinder, 'Conflict and Compromise: Evangelicalism and Popular Culture in Banbury, 1830-1870', paper read to Labour History Society Conference, 1976, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>H.T., 31 Aug. 1850, 14 May 1853, 20 May, 1 Nov. 1856.

June 1860, when two beershop keepers were charged with harbouring prostitutes. After a second prosecution in September, the Mayor instructed the police to continue bringing such cases, accusing them of 'great neglect' in not doing so previously. In February 1861 seven more licencees were prosecuted, leading to a public demonstration by the prostitutes through the main streets, hoping to prevent further prosecutions. In the words of Captain Jackson, a government inspector of soldiers' institutes, 'The Magistrates, from prudential motives, I suppose, did not persevere in carrying their determination into effect'<sup>1</sup>.

There matters would probably have rested, had it not been for the C.D.A.s. The response seems to have been settling down into a recognition that containment of the problem in the poorer areas, and the slow work of controlled reclamation, were the best ways of preventing the contamination of bourgeois wives and daughters. 'If vice and immorality must exist - and they will, despite the law', wrote the Telegraph, 'at any rate let them revel in their obscurity, and apply the law only when they become public nuisances'. Captain Jackson agreed: 'The utmost that can be done by the military and civil police to preserve the appearance of decency in the principal thoroughfares, is to try to keep the prostitutes and their companions within certain boundaries'. There were other arguments, but these were minority positions. The Guardian,

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 7 Jan., 23 June, 22 Sept. 1860, 9, 16 Feb. 1861; Report on Soldiers' Institutes at Aldershot and Portsmouth, Parl. Papers 1862, xxxii, p. 717.

for instance, argued that 'The reformatory is a boon, but to pay the hardworking sempstress - to remove her from the temptation - would be a blessing'. Those who were less radical than the editor of the Guardian felt that *laissez faire* was probably all that could be done<sup>1</sup>.

The local authorities were busy doing nothing in particular about prostitution when in 1864 the first C.D.A. was passed. It enabled the Metropolitan Police, stationed in the Dockyard (where they were heartily bored), to send suspected prostitutes for medical inspection; if found to be suffering from venereal disease, the women could be compulsorily committed to the Lock Wards of the local hospital or Workhouse. From the outset it was recognized that this task was far more touchy than any other carried out in the town, and both the Admiralty and the Police Commissioner were agreed on the need for 'discreet forbearing action of Police' under the Act. The general method of operation of the police was to first question infected men in the military and naval hospitals; informers from among the women themselves were always treated with suspicion, as likely to be unreliable. Acting on information received from the infected men, the police then questioned the girl, and tried to discover whether she was a common prostitute; if they decided she was, they asked her to voluntarily undergo an operation; most of the girls apparently agreed (though one has to ask oneself whether the girls actually knew that attendance was, at this stage, voluntary)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 9 Feb. 1861; Rep. on Soldiers' Institutes, cit., p.717; Portsmo. Guardian, 24 Oct. 1861.

<sup>2</sup>P.R.O., MEPOL 1/58, 4 Jan., 7 Feb., 7 Mar. 1865; Rep. Committee on Venereal Disease, Parl. Papers 1867-68, xxxvii, In February 1865, of 40 women examined, all but three attended voluntarily.

One or two words should be said about police behaviour under the C.D.A.s. A recent account of the Acts, operating from within a 'social control' perspective, sees them as an expression of 'the general atmosphere of social intolerance and institutionalized violence'. The police, say the authors, were guilty of 'abuses....obvious insults and discrimination'; the manifest injustice of the Acts led to a 'record of protest' by women and local communities, expressing deep 'popular hostility towards the Metropolitan Police'<sup>1</sup>. How does the Portsmouth evidence relate to this interpretation?

In fact, Portsmouth is at the least an exception to this general view. First, there seem to have been few 'abuses' of the Acts. Josephine Butler, who was almost invariably vague about her horror stories at the best of times, refused in Portsmouth to provide any actual instances of cruelty or indecency. She also declined to discuss the official statistics; the most committed local penitentiary activist, Mrs Mary Colebrook, was able to show that the Acts had drastically reduced the number of prostitutes in the town. Nor was there very much in the way of protest. It is suggested that the 1873 soup riot in the Royal Albert Hospital was a 'prepolitical' protest; but much more effective demonstrations took place against the prosecutions of brothel-keepers in 1861, and were repeated when brothel-owners again started to appear in court in 1867. Prostitutes were capable of much more systematic public demonstrations when their interests were threatened than the stone-throwing or sheet-tearing that met the C.D.A.s. A third contradictory element in the Portsmouth evidence is the absence

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<sup>1</sup>Walkowitz, op.cit., pp. 193, 211-3.

of popular hostility, either to the Acts in general or the Metropolitan Police in particular. Local radicals, as has been seen, were likely to consider the London force a model of neutrality, compared with the local bobbies. Those who did resent the intrusion of the Metropolitan force were precisely those in the local power structure - magistrates, councillors - who felt their authority undermined by the C.D.A.s. They were right to feel threatened: the central state was well aware that local dignitaries often had direct or indirect interests in prostitution<sup>1</sup>.

Indeed, rather than protest, it seems that Portsmouth's prostitutes and radical working men actually welcomed the C.D.A.s in their initial stages. If the Acts had worked in the crudely class-based, violent and prejudiced way that has been suggested, there would have been uproar. Yet the L.N.A. made little headway, and its records contain very little material at all from Portsmouth. Even by 1878, when the repeal campaign was making some headway, the Portsmouth repealers seem to have consisted mainly of clerics and engineering workers; not one of the fifty signatories to a repeal petition in that year was a shipwright, but eleven were engineers of different kinds. In the late 'sixties, the anti-C.D.A. campaign was led by an alliance of clerics and mildly feminist ladies, as can be seen from the Landport 'indignation meeting'

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<sup>1</sup>H.T., 31 Aug., 11, 14 Sept. 1867, 9 July 1870; Southsea Observer and Visitor's Directory, 21 Aug. 1874; Dolling used to write to the owners (not the keepers) of brothels, in the hope of shaming them into evicting their tenants; if this did not work, he tried the School Board officer and the Police Superintendent; as a last resort, he named the culprits during a sermon (op.cit., pp. 64-5).

of 1870. Some 500 turned up; in the chair was the Revd. Basil Aldwell, incumbent of St Luke's and an Orangeman who had clashed with the radicals before. Aldwell upset his predominantly working class audience, by announcing that he considered the Paris Commune to be a divine punishment for the government-sanctioned brothels in Paris. This ill-judged comment provoked 'Hisses, and a voice - "Three cheers for the Republic of France", followed by loud cheers and cries of "Chair" and "Question"'. The first speaker, the Revd. J. Osborn of Southampton, protested that the Acts hit working people the hardest; it was innocent working men's wives who were interrogated, and it was poverty that caused prostitution. The radicals had no time for this. Thomas Ediss, secretary of the Reform League branch, complained bitterly of the speeches:

No facts, no figures, had been given with reference to the working of the Acts in Portsmouth; and this circumstance was to him an indirect proof that the Acts had been a success here. (Cheers and confusion) .... They had not brought up a single case in Portsmouth in which innocent wives and daughters had been proceeded against. (Cheers).... As to the protestation of the clergy and philanthropic men, when he found them seeking the welfare of the working classes, he should have more faith in them <sup>1</sup>.

Even the prostitutes seem to have been happy with some parts of the Acts. A certificate of clean health could be proudly flourished among the customers on the Hard and in the alleys off Queen Street; there was even a petition from some prostitutes for the Acts to continue<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Memorial to the Right Hon. W.H. Smith, M.P., from Ministers of Religion and Others, resident in Portsmouth and the adjacent parishes under the Operation of the Acts, 1878, Fawcett Library; H.T., 26 Nov. 1870.

<sup>2</sup> See the comments of Drs. A.M. Garrington and J.W.M. Miller at the Portsea Island Society for the Cultivation of Science and Literature, Portsmo. Times, 30 Mar.; H.T., 30 Mar. 1872.

TABLE FOUR: METROPOLITAN POLICE RETURNS OF PROSTITUTES IN  
PORTSMOUTH, 1864-75

	Registering: first time	Registering: second time	Registering: third time	No. of known 'common women'
1864	30	-	-	-
1865	331	-	-	1,355
1866	179	-	-	789
1867	236	-	-	748
1868	395	-	-	739
1869	426	67	1	730
1870	293	71	5	590
1871	326	90	3	586
1872	318	76	2	580
1873	326	71	5	558
1874	370	89	5	555
1875	282	70	6	494

Source: P.R.O. HO 9511/17273A.

This is not to say that the Acts had no impact upon levels of prostitution. As can be seen from Table Four, the Acts were associated with a steady decline in the aggregate number of prostitutes, probably as marginal cases dropped out rather than face the potential humiliation of registration. Child prostitution declined particularly rapidly: in 1866 there were thirty-one cases of girl prostitutes known to the police whose ages were less than sixteen; by 1870, when police information was much better, there were only thirteen, all of whom were over fourteen years old. This seems to support the Walkowitzes' main conclusion, which is that the Acts encouraged the decline of casual whoring and its replacement by organized,



professional prostitution<sup>1</sup>.

This discussion of the way the C.D.A.s operated in Portsmouth is not just a digression that allows us to test the conclusions of Judith and Daniel Walkowitz. It also makes an important point about Portsmouth's power structure, for although the Walkowitzes' feminist sympathies have probably led them to over-generalise from their findings, they have nonetheless uncovered serious opposition to the Acts in Plymouth and Southampton. Portsmouth's position was rather different. Although the Devonport Yard had been policed by the Metropolitan force, there is a sense in which the London men were seen as intruders in Plymouth proper, even more so in Southampton. In Portsmouth, they were an established force, whose history had brought them into no unusual disrepute, and even (in comparison with the borough force) brought them some popular admiration. In Portsmouth, the Metropolitan police turned from property defence, which was relatively non-controversial, to cultural control, potentially much more debatable. In Southampton, the Metropolitan force moved immediately onto the terrain of morality, starting work on marshy ground. Differences in context and history may well account for the differing receptions accorded to the Acts, and with them the Metropolitan force, in different towns.

Meanwhile, the work of the rescue societies continued. Here we see the familiar pattern of voluntary moral reform activity: shortage of funds, and sometimes intractable raw materials.

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<sup>1</sup>P.R.O. HO 9511/17273A; Walkowitz, op.cit., p. 220.

While the energies of the Rescue Society were devoted to providing rescued women with a 'Home' (seen as the missing element that had sent them to the bad in the first place), the women tended to stay for surprisingly short periods. Many discharged themselves, and it was often suspected that they returned to prostitution: some twentythree per cent of the 1870 intake left in this way, as did almost forty per cent in 1872. The society continually experienced what it called 'many discouragements as to funds'. By 1872, its largest subscribers were retired naval officers and the urban gentry: John Deverell of Portsdown was the largest donor of funds; the ancestors of the Barings and Bonham Carters, now safely living out of the Island, gave money; others donated funds from Titchfield, London, Fareham, and Winchester. Like many other attempts at moral reform, such as the church fund of 1852, its supporters rarely included many local industrialists, and only a few were other businessmen; rather funds came from the semi-gentry of the services and the county<sup>1</sup>.

(iv) Portsmouth and moral reform

It is always difficult to gauge the effects of moral reform campaigns. This chapter has shown that only rarely did large numbers of working people respond to the rallying cries of the moral reformers; when they apparently did, as in the popular support for the C.D.A.s, it seems that their support (always supposing that the C.D.A.s can be seen as an instance of moral reform, which is questionable) was intended as a gesture against local elites, and in particular against the

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<sup>1</sup>A.R., Portsea Rescue Society, 1872, P.C.L. (LP); H.T., 22 Jan. 1870.

clerics who dominated the local branch of the Ladies' National Association. In other instances, such as the undoubted support given by some working men to the temperance movement, moral reform slogans and beliefs were no doubt adapted by working people to make sense of their own situations<sup>1</sup>. More often, moral reformers were openly resisted, and their adherents within the community, like Noah Wareham, faced ostracism, hostility and open violence.

These considerations confirm one theme that has arisen at times in the last four chapters: the concept of 'social control' may not be, in itself, an adequate description of the movements that attempted to alter the ways of life of the lower strata in nineteenth century Britain. It was not 'control' that was being exercised, but attempted reform ('reform' understood as 'reshaping'): it was not 'society' that was doing it, nor even an homogeneous bourgeoisie, but rather small groups drawn from the bourgeoisie; often enough, it failed miserably, yet 'society' did not collapse. Obviously, 'social control' is capable of a variety of readings, and it may be that there is a possibility of a non-functionalist use of the term which will incorporate the difficulties that have been faced here. Yet these difficulties, in the meantime, can be taken as justifying my preference for more specific terms: 'moral reform', in particular.

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<sup>1</sup>Gray has shown this to be the case in Edinburgh, op.cit., ch. vii; Crossick has done the same for Kentish London: 'Artisan Values', art. cit., pp. 306-17.

If moral reform movements were not functional in this way, however, they could have performed other roles in maintaining bourgeois hegemony. Very often, they were a part (not necessarily the most important part) of the wider processes of bourgeois self-definition. In the increasingly urbanized, bureaucratic and impersonal world of nineteenth century Britain, the urban propertied strata assumed a new importance. In particular, the years of political reform threw these groups, now the bulk of the electorate in both parliamentary and municipal elections, into a new prominence. Political leadership could not be detached entirely from questions of moral leadership; definition of place in local and national society became important, contested not only in political and economic terms but also in cultural ones. Just as one's ability to dance a minuet might win one a bride, or inability might lose one, so open support for moral reform helped to define the type of person one was. It associated you in public with those who ran the charity; it sat you at an A.G.M. on the same platform as a baronet or a duke, and it might see you attending the same fund-raising activities. Of course, such activities did not necessarily mean homogeneity and uniformity within the bourgeoisie itself, any more than we can speak of unified working class culture. Nude swimming on Southsea beach, tolerated by some councillors, was patriotically defended by others, and scandalized yet others. The Board of Guardians conducted a lively defence of its right to distribute beer and snuff to aged paupers, and was surcharged for its pains. The Free Mart Fair, abolished as a disgrace-

fully immoral nuisance in 1848, was defended by the Victual-  
lers' Association president, Robert Kiln, as well as by  
antiquarians like Henry Slight<sup>1</sup>.

A simple 'social control' explanation assumes that there is  
an agreed social group which requires controlling, and that  
there is at least partial agreement upon how they are to be  
controlled. Yet there was no such consensus on many occasions,  
and to describe all such movements as attempts at 'social  
control' may prevent us from distinguishing unified bourgeois  
movements from minority ones. If we see moral reform activity  
as potentially concerned as much with processes of self-  
definition within the upper strata, as with desires to control  
the lower strata, weaknesses and conflicts become more easy to  
explain. Bourgeois self-definition itself was a process which  
might involve struggles between different groups within the  
bourgeoisie. The social movements generated by such motives,  
of course, once in motion, assumed an impetus of their own<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Petition re Free Mart Fair, P.C.R.O. CC2/3, n.d. /1842/.

<sup>2</sup>The best discussions of the issues raised here are G.S. Jones,  
'Class Expression versus Social Control', cit.;  
A.P. Donajgrodzki, intro. to op.cit.; W.A. Muraskin,  
'The Social Control Theory in American History: A Critique',  
Journal of Social History, ix, 1975; M. Janowitz, 'Socio-  
logical Theory and Social Control', American Journal of  
Sociology, lxxxi, pp. 82-108; R. Wallis, 'Moral  
Indignation and the Media: An Analysis of the N.V.A.L.A.',  
Sociology, x, 1976, pp. 271-95.

## CONCLUSION

### I

Sitting at the foot of the Hampshire downs, sheltered by the Isle of Wight from stormy weather and the French, Portsmouth was a naval town right down to the timbers of its houses. While the Industrial Revolution tore at the fabric of rural Britain to produce the Bradfords, Oldhams and Birminghams, Portsmouth was settled in a long tradition of urban development. In the Dockyard, the town possessed a workforce and local landmark that was remarkable for its size and familiarity. In what was supposed to be the age of the dynamic Victorian entrepreneur, Portsmouth was full of government employees: Dockyardmen, soldiers, sailors customs officers. It was not a typical industrial town.

Yet Portsmouth's story is not entirely without application to our understanding of the experiences of other towns, and of the middle decades of the century as a whole. It is possible to overstate Portsmouth's uniqueness. Few towns could look back, like York, to clear medieval origins and functions, but most could see around their streets the heritage of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Those, such as Middlesbrough or Ashford, that were genuinely new towns were few and far between. Nor should the peculiarities resulting from State employment be over-emphasised. A few towns possessed publicly-owned industries of a size approaching Portsmouth's, and their histories are by no means simple reflections of

their economic structure<sup>1</sup>. Certain private employers demonstrated some of the characteristic features of State employment - a distant employer, a paternalist style of management, a non-competitive product market. The extent to which employers lived a good way away from the muck that manured their brass varied a good deal from industry to industry, and from sector to sector within industries<sup>2</sup>; the growth of joint-stock organization, and the increasing scale of capital both encouraged the spread of absentee ownership. And whether absentee or local, employers with sizeable workforces and a sense of duty to 'their people' built elements of welfare into the employer-employee relationship. The Fitzwilliams of South Yorkshire, for instance, employed well over 1,000 people by the 1840s, over half of them in the estate mines. These workers received cheap housing, small allotments, widows' pensions, retirement allowances, medical attention, injury pay, and a considerable degree of job security<sup>3</sup>. Finally, private employers might achieve a relatively non-competitive product market, especially when their own product was particularly suited to a specific type of market (as was Welsh steam-coal to shipping or South Yorkshire steam-coal for the

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<sup>1</sup>The only one so far studied is Kentish London: Crossick, Ph.D. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Of great use throughout this section are P. Joyce, 'The Factory Politics of Lancashire in the Later Nineteenth Century', Hist. J. xviii, 1975; and P. Spaven, 'Main Gates of Protest: Contrasts in Rank and File Activity among the South Yorkshire Miners, 1858-1894', in R.J. Harrison (ed.), op.cit.

<sup>3</sup>G. Mee, 'Employer-Employee Relationships in the Industrial Revolution: The Fitzwilliam Collieries', in Pollard and Holmes (eds.), op.cit., pp. 47-52.

railways)<sup>1</sup>. Employers thus might lessen the pressures upon them to rationalize production processes - arguably the case in a number of British industries so long as little overseas production should threaten British dominance. Nevertheless, despite all the qualifications, Portsmouth was an unusual place in an age when capitalist industry was characteristically small-scale and private.

This examination of Portsmouth has produced four ideas which might usefully be applied to the wider society. Most specifically, it suggests a certain caution when considering the 1830s as classic 'years of reform'. Secondly, it tries to extend our understanding of the growth and development of class consciousness, among the middle and upper strata in particular. Thirdly, it queries the ways in which many historians have started to use the notion of 'social control' to describe and explain bourgeois behaviour in the nineteenth century. Lastly, and perhaps most diffidently, I conclude that it is difficult to identify a distinct group of 'power-holders' at any given time, and attempt to suggest reasons for this.

## II

The political reformers of the 1830s were so comprehensive in their ambition that the limits of their achievements have attracted less attention than their successes. Little, for

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<sup>1</sup>J. Goodchild, 'Some Early Yorkshire Coalmasters' Associations', South Yorkshire J. (Cusworth Hall, Doncaster), ii, 1970. Apparently Fitzwilliam never bothered to join the associations: Spaven, op.cit., p. 231.



instance, has been made of the utter failure of Army reform; the partial nature of political reform has been viewed as the outcome of a deliberate decision to absorb the middle classes into political society, excluding the working class<sup>1</sup>. Even the most careful account of continuities is commonly followed by the view of the 1830s as a major turning-point:

It is evident that the 1832 settlement permitted the perpetuation of certain 'aristocratic' institutions, areas of privilege, the aristocratic style of life . . . . But when we move closer a judgement must be more qualified. At the level of local government (except in the countryside) aristocratic influence was largely displaced: the Lord Lieutenancy effectually disappeared; the magistracy was partly taken over; the Board of Guardians and the organs of municipal government were satisfactorily urban bourgeois institutions; the police force (one of the first fruits of 1832) was on an acceptable bourgeois-bureaucratic model 2.

Other historians have pushed the point much further<sup>3</sup>, but it is common ground that the 1830s saw a crucial turning-point in political relations between the classes.

It is not my intention to deny all validity to this view. The reforms of the 1830s - which were above all reforms involving the government of the towns - did indeed mark a turning-point. The 'hidden hand' of class pushed things along the way; but one of the most important results of the 1830s was the way that they thrust the urban propertied to the front of the stage. From this moment, their behaviour always

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<sup>1</sup>P.D. Jones, op.cit., for non-reform of the Army; for political reform, cf. D.C. Moore, op.cit.; H.P. Moorhouse, 'The Political Incorporation of the British Working Class: An Interpretation', Sociology vii, 1973, pp. 341-59; Perkin, op.cit., ch. ix.

<sup>2</sup>E.P. Thompson, Poverty of Theory, cit., p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>Rubinstein, op.cit., passim.

mattered, because it was the behaviour of a part of the governing group. The machinery which enabled the urban propertied to take part in the processes of government brought publicity down upon their heads, sometimes for the first time. Allied to this, government was visited by an apparently new desire for economy, efficiency, and accountability. Perhaps, had this thesis closed with the advent of Tory rule in 1841, it would have been easier to accept the customary view of the '30s. Taking the longer view, the experiences of Portsmouth may help to brake hastier interpretations.

Across a whole range of institutions change was slow, met with resistance, and produced unintended consequences. Politically, the new Councillors listened as respectfully to Howard and the Carters as had the closed Corporation before them. In Parliamentary elections, the names that had been toasted in the old Guildhall were read out by the Mayor from the steps outside, although thousands had been polled instead of handful. The shift from Whig predominance was slow and gradual; old Whigs died and faded away and were replaced by faceless Liberals; in the 1860s Toryism appeared as a realistic alternative. The most important influences in politics - government policy on the Yard, the level of the rates, and the growing suburb of Southsea - combined in a most unholy and unsteady alliance, unseating the Whig-Liberal hold in the process.

Much reformist legislation was permissive rather than compulsory. This was so for the County Police, and in practice for the Borough Police, for the Corporations Act had little to say about the nature of the forces it established. Far from

suddenly falling into order as a smoothly-operating 'bourgeois-bureaucratic model' the police started to walk the path of their predecessors, and were subsequently reorganized on a number of separate occasions. Even then, the constables were difficult to control, and indeed viewed the force in an instrumental manner, as a job. There was nothing new about local attempts to reform the Poor Law, which commenced with the onset of Peace rather than in the '30s. Even after several Assistant Commissioners had ridden down to enforce the 1834 Act, Portsmouth's Guardians were bent on persisting in the paths of local - to some extent parochial - administration and control. If it is difficult to describe either the Council or the police force as a 'satisfactorily urban bourgeois institution', it is almost unthinkable for the Board of Guardians. Its members' behaviour certainly shocked and alienated the respectable Southsea group, and probably played its part in provoking the attempted breakaway of 1878.

The most important and immediate effects of Reform seem to have come in the centrally-administered Dockyard. Graham's initiatives clearly made a difference to the way that business was carried on; the Navy at large was being affected in the long run by the changing nature of naval warfare and the demands made on it by the development of the world economy. But against the establishment of H.M.S. Excellent as a gunnery training ship, say, must be balanced Graham's closure of the Yard schools, which was hardly consonant with the theories of orthodox political economy. Moreover, 'economical reform' had been attempted on a number of previous occasions,

the 'bourgeois-bureaucratic' abolition of chip money coming in 1830. The Admiralty continued to worry about the Yards' accounting systems for many decades after the 1860s; customary methods of working, and even of administering the labour process, exerted their influence after the transition to metal ship-building. Even in the Yard, then, Reform was protracted, uneven, and sometimes contradictory in nature.

### III

Over-estimation of the turning-point of the 1830s seems to be associated with overstatement of the direct influence of class upon politics. Historians accustomed to harsh, often violent, friction between master and worker can too easily forget that some men and women passed these years in relative quiet. One can easily believe that many Portsmouth workers heard little (and possibly would have cared little) about Luddites, or Blanketeers, even about Chartists or Trade Unionists. Where the institutions and personnel of government had been tested (even more, found wanting) by movements of self-aware, organized working people, pressure was built up for Reform from above. Particularly in urban or urbanizing areas, working class rebellion could be seen as an indictment of 'aristocratical incompetence'. Peterloo or the Bull Ring riots, forcing the head of steam in the ill-administered cities of Manchester and Birmingham, seemed a long way from Hampshire.

The thesis that bourgeois class consciousness was formed in response to working class militancy has been most carefully

documented by Edward Thompson. 'In the decades after 1795', he writes, 'there was profound alienation between classes in Britain, and working people were thrust into a state of apartheid .... [The] French Revolution consolidated Old Corruption by uniting landowners and manufacturers in a common panic'. By the 1830s, this was a permanent feature of the social structure:

In the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and as against their rulers and employers. This ruling class was itself much divided, and in fact only gained in cohesion over the same years because certain antagonisms were resolved (or faded into relative insignificance) in the face of an insurgent working class. Thus the working class presence was, in 1832, the most significant factor in British political life <sup>1</sup>.

It is possible that Thompson's evidence, drawn heavily from the north (especially from the West Riding), may overstate the extent to which British working people viewed the years 1780 to 1832 as 'catastrophic'<sup>2</sup>. So far as much of Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands is concerned, Thompson is likely to be right. In Portsmouth, however, the sources have little to say. The most likely explanation for this silence is that the 'catastrophe' was delayed, coming only in the 1860s when the Yard was so savagely cut back. Certainly, it was from this period that trade unionism began to seem a feasible strategy, though actual organization was very often precipitated by demarcation problems. Even those trades which were

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, Making of the English Working Class, cit., pp. 12, 117, 195, 782.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

organized before the '60s made more conservative noises than did their northern counterparts. The Operative Stonemasons produced the most startling instance: quite a few other branches wanted to end the use of the strike during the 1840s, but only Portsmouth tried to have the word expunged from the very language!<sup>1</sup>

The labour movement was less militant in some northern towns than in others, but all were more militant than Portsmouth's. Cotton masters, colliery owners and landed nobility - who were anyway tightly bound together by rent, credit, debt, or even kinship - might well jump into one another's arms in fright: between 1780 and 1832, they were haunted by illegal unions, secret Jacobins, Luddites, pike-makers, and would-be insurrectionaries. Nothing of the kind disturbed the sleep of Portsmouth's half-pay officers, master staymakers, and Yard officials. Class antagonisms could be found in plenty, but they were far less salient in the town's life than elsewhere. Even the sad passage of the Tolpuddle exiles as they went to their sentences evoked no response from a quiescent and inward-looking labour movement.

Little wonder, then, that bourgeois Portsmouth was so divided. There were two big issues in local politics: rates and the Yard. Both helped divide bourgeois political sympathies, almost to the point of schizophrenia. Like most of the urban propertied, Portsmouth's bourgeoisie favoured theoretical

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<sup>1</sup> S. and B. Webb, op.cit., p. 181.

opposition to centralization: not only was taxation involved, but also the implication that the local authorities were incapable of doing their job. But support for municipal autonomy might run counter to the desire for a strong state, for only an outward-looking, aggressive government would keep the Yard flourishing. The internal tensions became more marked when the State itself started to argue that economies in the Yard were in the 'national interest', and refused to pay an economic rate on its own property. The Yard officials themselves stayed out of politics, at least after the Reform years; the next most closely affected group was the mass of traders and small businessmen, who counted for so much during the elections and depended upon the Yard's activities for their customers.

Culturally, the divisions were just as marked. Southsea Society was confined largely to officers, commercial men, some professionals, and the Southsea entrepreneurs. It did not admit master staymakers - except Thomas Jackson, who was wealthy and who called himself a draper (just as Walter Besant liked to think of his tax-gatherer grandfather as a 'civil servant'). George Meredith, who was born in High Street, used to claim that he came from 'near Petersfield'. A medical man, who had purchased a commission in the Volunteers, could sneer at the Yard's Master Shipwright as a mere 'carpenter'. The military men in their turn had felt the weight of genteel opinion when they had demanded the right to organize the duty roster at the charity hospital. The marriage registers confirm the existence of quite marked status groups

within the local bourgeoisie, although it is doubtful whether they are reliable enough to serve as the basis for comparisons with other towns.

It is difficult to relate bourgeois class consciousness in Portsmouth to specific phenomena like the Reform or anti-corn law campaigns<sup>1</sup>. A few significant 'moments' did arise; although they may or may not have been decisive in forming bourgeois class consciousness, they did take on a symbolic importance for a time. At times, Southsea became important in this symbolic way, standing for a way of life that had to be protected and defended (or, as Alderman Bilton recommended, left to fend for itself). But class was not a salient issue, although it was indirectly present. The 1848 panic in Southsea was provoked not by Chartism (its contribution, if any, was indirect) but by fears of a spate of burglaries. Rather nearer to class confrontation was the Battle of Southsea in 1874, when a fence erected over a part of the Common by the Pier Company was pulled down; the crowd dragged the pieces of wood round to the side of the Pier rooms, and ceremonially cremated them in view of the respectables in the rooms. They resisted attempts to re-erect the fence for another three days. To this day, Southsea Common is open land. In 1874 the authorities climbed down, but not simply through fear of the crowd. Not a few Councillors detested the Pier Company Directors on purely personal grounds. Others genuinely saw the Common as the birthright of 'the People'. In

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<sup>1</sup>Briggs, 'Middle Class Consciousness', cit.



the end only one 'rioter' ever came to trial, and he was packed off to prison in haste by a biassed Bench (two of the three magistrates were connected with the Company). A widespread and persistent campaign for the man's release confirmed that Portsmouth was not immune from the social movements that had arisen elsewhere. The Southsea elite felt betrayed and the Southsea Observer even compared local events with the Paris Commune. But the Battle took place over purely local issues; it was even, in a sense, defensive. The national popular reform movements of the preceding century, from the Jacobin societies to the Reform League, had found few followers in Portsmouth. Bourgeois Portsmouth was separate from working-class Portsmouth, living, feeding, relaxing, and often earning elsewhere; and it knew it. But it rarely felt its position to be under threat.

What threat there was largely came from within its own ranks. The local bourgeoisie was as diverse economically as it was politically and culturally, resting upon a broad band of the small masters and tradesmen that R.S. Neale calls the 'middling class',<sup>1</sup>. The term itself may be an unhappy one, but it points to something with which historians are familiar: the fact that small propertied men were not automatically to be found lining up behind big property or the State. Perhaps, as Foster suggests, this was due to 'selective trading'; but majors and midshipmen were as capable of withholding their

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<sup>1</sup>R.S. Neale, Class and Ideology in Victorian Britain, 1972, ch.i. E.P. Thompson, Making of the Working Class, pp. 198-9, discusses continued small business involvement in popular radicalism.

custom as were shipwrights, and anyway the local evidence of systematic selective trading is pretty thin. There is no a priori reason why small masters and traders should align themselves at all times with the rest of the bourgeoisie, and they were sometimes found among its most outspoken critics<sup>1</sup>. John Augustus Howell Howell was a marine stores dealer; Alderman Bilton was a chemist; John Sheppard was a grocer; Samuel John Dart, who had the longest record of Chartist activity, kept a private school. The popular army at the Battle of Southsea was 'generalised' by a group of radical councillors, Barney Miller spearheading the assault from his undertaker's van. Political opponents of the system were better placed to express and act upon their beliefs if they were economically independent of the ruling groups, and all the radicals lived in the popular districts: Bilton at Landport, Killpartrick the grocer at Kingston, Dart at Buckland, Howell in East St., Miller in St Mary's St.: their customers came from the menu peuple. Drinksellers remained vulnerable<sup>2</sup> to the magistrates; shopkeepers were vulnerable only to their customers, and this could give them considerable independence - which is why Henry Johnson, the Chartist shipwright, was bought a small store by his mates after his dismissal.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the central arguments of T.J. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England: Case Studies from the North-East, Brighton 1975; D. Gadian, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup>Howell, while a beershop keeper, had been successfully prosecuted: H.T. 19 May 1849.

If small business proved a nursery for root-and-branch reformers, professional intellectuals mostly toed the line. Even Daniel Howard, who had a well thought-out position on reform, seems to have traded his intellectual and rhetorical skills for the chance of effective participation in the Carter group of Whigs. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, and technicians: most followed the line of their patrons, only falling out with them when their own particular expertise (or retainer) was at stake. In defence of their own professional position they could be quite tenacious, but their material conditions would not have permitted them the independence of the small tradesmen and masters, even had they wished for it.

#### IV

Given the diversity of the bourgeoisie, it seems unlikely that it could, as a class, impose its will upon another class. This, however, is the implication of the notion that the bourgeoisie exerted 'social control' over the labouring masses. If the concept of social control has helped to draw attention to the ways that the rich and powerful hoped to change and modify the culture and behaviour of working people, it does not explain why there are so few instances of successful deliberate control. A few such cases occur in this thesis: the Fairs were abolished, although not without some resistance (remarkably persistent, in the case of Portsdown Fair); there was a mass following for the Band of Hope, if more for its leisure provision than its temperance message;

the Contagious Diseases Acts helped reduce prostitution, although this was not their only or even chief aim<sup>1</sup>. Much more frequent, and often more impressive, are the stories of failure. No-one could persuade the ratepayers to finance a public library, naked swimmers continued to scandalize carriage passengers who drove along the Esplanade, school attendance fluctuated with parental needs, most adults steered well clear of organized temperance, the able-bodied poor received outdoor relief, the pubs did a roaring trade, the churches remained half-empty, soldiers and sailors spent their money on prostitutes before listening to sermons at the servicemen's Homes, and so on. No charity or good cause received half the enthusiasm or good will that went into the Co-operatives, or won half the membership of the Friendly Societies. Working people knew rather more about their own needs than was often supposed; interference from outside was met by sullen disregard, occasional abuse, and sometimes outright repudiation. Repudiation rather than resistance: the victims of Portsmouth's popular culture were not necessarily the bourgeoisie, but might be someone like Noah Wareham, the temperate wheelwright. On a more mundane level, attempts at social control often seemed simply irrelevant: existing working class organizations like the Friendly Society and Co-op seemed to be coping quite well enough.

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<sup>1</sup>These three examples could all be described as "social control", which is all they have in common (see ch. XI).

The phrase 'social control' implies something quite specific. 'Control' suggests a one-way process: the controller presses the appropriate keys, and the missiles obediently change direction. 'Social' identifies the controller as 'society', and not specific men and women in specific relationships towards others. A reasonable extension of the social control notion would be to identify those who rebelled as enemies of 'society': these might include those who barracked Sunday closing campaigners, or voted against public libraries, or swam in the nude. To brush away such groups as enemies of 'society', or plain rebels, is both to reduce their position and to magnify it. Their aims were restricted: to continue to drink and swim as they always had done; yet they were motivated by more than anti-social spite. The term 'social control' is, in this sense, too close to the viewpoint of the would-be controllers to be of much use. Yet in a wider view, it does not help much in discussing the bourgeoisie as a whole; not all members of the bourgeoisie participated in moral reform movements, and very often the would-be controllers were a minority within their own class. Despite the value of the term 'social control' in bringing the intentions of many bourgeois campaigners to our attention, the notion is of extremely limited value in analysing the effects and practices of the campaigns themselves.

V

Can we, then, identify a real ruling elite, responsible for those reform movements and political initiatives which

achieved a measure of success? It is possible to answer this question, if somewhat crudely. One group might possess extensive powers over certain people and on certain issues, though it could be impotent with regard to other people or other issues. Navy officers, all-powerful on board ship, carried little weight in local politics. Dockyard officials played little part in attempts to control their workers' behaviour once they had stepped out of the Yard gates. Power, after all, is a relative concept<sup>1</sup>. It matters a great deal whom one is speaking of, when, and with respect to what. To speak of class power is to speak of tendencies operating over a period, expressing very often a potential that is only achieved under the right conditions.

Many definitions of power are possible; perhaps the most useful is that which sees power-holders as exercising leadership over other bourgeois social groups. From the last decade of the eighteenth century to the 1840s leadership was given by the Whig oligarchs clustered around the Carters. Their tradition of dissent, combined with incorruptible reformism, expressed the political and moral aspirations of many urban property-owners until the middle years of the century. Those who rejected their leadership were, for the most part, those who lived off the droppings of Old Corruption: Customs officers, public contractors, the Army and Navy. But by the 'forties

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<sup>1</sup>See S. Lukes, Power: A Radical View, 1974, for a general account; Lukes believes that power is 'an essentially contestable concept'.

things were going sour. The Carters were aging, and they now mostly lived outside the town: John Bonham Carter the 2nd. sat as M.P. for Winchester, not Portsmouth, and the brewery was run by outside managers after the death of Edward Carter. Nor had the Carters ever had much pull in the Yard.

More substantially, the propertied felt that they had more of a stake in the political status quo. In contrast with the pre-Reform years, the urban bourgeoisie now felt their interests as well protected and managed by Tories as Liberals. Simultaneously, Southsea's growth gave the 'urban gentry' a significant purchase on the town. The Southsea 'urban gentry' had a very different background and life-style from the old-town, entrepreneurial Carters; the new suburb was rich compost for the flowering of Toryism, among the crescents, villas and terraces. By the 1860s it is harder to identify any group exercising the clear-cut leadership of the Carters. Individuals can be identified, but each was persistently challenged by other would-be leaders: Emanuel Emanuel, with interests in Portsea, Old Portsmouth, and Southsea; the Ford brothers, both solicitors and business promoters; the Stewart brothers and other clerics; a fluctuating group of officers. Leadership within the bourgeoisie was not fixed nor static, and it is difficult to identify.

The Dockyard explains a good deal of Portsmouth's history. Economically, it employed a large proportion of the town's workforce, yet made no profits to be accumulated locally or

elsewhere. Equally striking is the way that Admiralty interest stopped at the Yard gates: if local politicians could not easily influence the behaviour of the largest employer, neither did that employer try to participate in the town's life. The enclosed nature of the Yard points to a remarkable contrast between Portsmouth and the Lancashire cotton towns. In Blackburn, Bury, and elsewhere, the larger employers dominated the religion, politics, education, and leisure of their immediate surroundings; the longer-established employers seem to have enjoyed a surprising but genuine popular loyalty<sup>1</sup>. In some iron-making and coal-mining districts, company towns existed where a single employer dominated the economy, politics and culture. To take a less stark and extreme instance, many districts faced a small number of major employers who controlled local amenities, housing, retail outlets, and so on. At Denaby and Sharlston, houses, shops, schools and chapels were erected by the employers. Similar provisions were made by Titus Salt for his Bradford mill hands; and Saltaire, like Sharlston, was given no chance to get drunk, for there was no pub<sup>2</sup>.

Even towns where absentee employers made little attempt to interfere with working people outside their jobs stand in contrast to Portsmouth. In many South Yorkshire mining areas, a single employer might dominate the local economy but show little interest in its politics or cultural life. Several

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<sup>1</sup>Joyce, op.cit., p. 528. See Spaven, op.cit., p. 218 for similar findings among miners.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. A. Wilson, op.cit.; A. Campbell, op.cit.; Spaven, op.cit., p. 206; G. Barnby, op.cit.; J. Goodchild, Coalmining at Sharlston, Wakefield 1976, pp. 21-3.



of the larger South Yorkshire coal-masters were absentees, but their pits were frequently trade union strongholds. At Rawmarsh, for instance, a union leader claimed that

So soon as these men leave the pit-bank, the authority of capital ceases. They feel and enjoy the blessings of liberty, and all this produces a healthy respect between employer and employed. <sup>1</sup>

Rawmarsh was dominated by the Charlesworths, who were absentees and offered no company housing.

Portsmouth fell between the two stools. It was a company town in that one employer dominated the economy; the Yard also offered certain welfare benefits such as the pension and steady employment; local managers had the power to hire and fire. Thus Portsmouth's Yard workers, like Fitzwilliam's miners, had cause to look to their jobs and steer clear of trouble. However, unlike other paternalistic company towns, Portsmouth's major employer was not interested in municipal politics, housed none of its workers, owned no shops (truck or otherwise), and sent no J.P.s to the local bench<sup>2</sup>; it didn't even want to pay its rates. So, although local politicians were expected to petition the Admiralty if something went drastically wrong, the Yard was not really embroiled in local politics. Local working people were hardly likely to develop a political critique of the local establishment, because in their experience there was no monolithic ruling class trying to dominate their lives. In so far as the attempt to dominate was made, it met with a signal lack of

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<sup>1</sup>Miner and Workman's Advocate, 18 July 1863, cit. in Spaven, op.cit., p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>D. Phillips, 'The Black Country Magistracy', cit., pp.166-7 182-3. A further interesting contrast in that Portsmouth seems to be the only industrial area where the proportion of industrialists on the bench actually fell between the 1830s and the 1870s.

success.

## VI

In such circumstances, it is difficult to identify power with individuals. Possibly some notion of hegemony might better suit the brew of negotiation, mutual ignorance, and occasional irritability that seems to characterize relations between classes in Victorian Portsmouth<sup>1</sup>. Many usages of 'power' and 'social control' see outcomes as the results of intentions, which is perhaps one valid definition of functionalism. Many moral, political and educational reformers did, however, see themselves as engaged in something akin to 'social control', and this affects our view of the significance of their activities. It is possible that their importance lay more in the consequences of their campaigns for the rest of the bourgeoisie<sup>2</sup>. In a society which was in flux, in which deep inroads had been made into juridical status distinctions, and in which new accumulations of wealth were constantly surfacing, reform activities of various kinds could act as important ways of defining oneself. This was more of a problem in the towns than in the country, for it was in the towns that successive social, economic and political changes had thrust the urban propertied as a group before the limelight.

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<sup>1</sup>The literature around Gramsci's concept of hegemony is now unmanageable. Useful examples can be found in J. Femia, 'Hegemony and Consciousness in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci', Political Studies xxiii, 1975, pp. 29-48; R.Q. Gray, 'Bourgeois hegemony in Victorian Britain', cit. One notices a tendency towards functionalist interpretations of the concept of hegemony, despite the undoubted quality of Gramsci's insights.

<sup>2</sup>N. Abercrombie and B. Turner, 'The Dominant Ideology Thesis', British J. of Sociology, xxix, 1978, pp. 149-67.

Portsmouth had no Titus Salt, nor even a Seebohm Rowntree to record its ups and downs. It did not have a Fitzwilliam, whose agent might write clauses into tenancy agreements, exercise supervision over pension awards, and receive apologetic strikers on bended knees. Instead it had the Admiralty, an employer that was paternalistic but too distant to be vigilant or genuinely benevolent. In the Yard workforce, Portsmouth had a group of workers who would queue to humbly petition their Lordships of the Admiralty, but would never kneel to them; who expected regular employment with a pension at the end, and looked for no interference once they left the Yard gates. Protected by Friendly Society, Co-op, and employer provisions, the Yard worker was likely to see little point in aggressive class consciousness. To speak of 'power' in the way Weber sometimes does, as something exercised over people and even against their will, is to speak of something that in Portsmouth is hard to discover. In general, subordinate strata are unlikely to resist the initiative of their rulers, unless they directly affect their own lives. In Portsmouth, the largest workforce had sheltered itself against most likely incursions. Should treason prosper, as the episode of the public library nicely illustrates, they were far from loath to defend their own position.

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